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 The Journal of Mind and Behavior
 Autumn 1991, Volume 12, Number 4
 Pages 541-548
 ISSN 0271-0137

Inwardness and Existence: Subjectivity in/and Hegel, Heidegger, Marx, and Freud. Walter A. Davis. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1989, 425 pages, \$22.50 paper.

Reviewed by Leighton Brooks McCutchen, Shelburne Falls Clinical Group

As an enterprise, western philosophy endeavors to reconcile the human activity of interpretation, bound within the reflective course of the cultural cogito, with *experience*, a realm of engagement and occurrence which remains indifferent to, and confounding of, philosophy's various methods. Philosophy's history charts this struggle to bridge between interpretive logic and lived experience—to maintain dynamic contact between the deepening spirals of inwardness and existence. Failure is evident in every discourse where the theoretician's rational logic, his or her argument, slides into abstractions and intellectual disengagements of metatheory anchored in a priori assumptions. These assumptions attempt to stabilize an interpretation at the cost of severing contact with the unremitting transformations of experience.

Consciousness functions as a psychodynamic, spatio-temporal focal point. It relies upon its patterns of logic and emotions to account for its field of perceptions, to engage through interpretation all that it is not. Consciousness' rational logic works to recapture, integrate and order what it perceives as an external, lost landscape of *ex*-perience. At the same time, through reflectivity consciousness encounters the logical conundrum that its methods are contingent upon experience, and/or that it may be inventing its own reality inclusive of experience.

The structure of dialectic logic can be understood as a conceptual arena wherein rational logic gazes up from its own internal house-keeping to face its *conflicted* relation to experience. In *Inwardness and Existence* Walter Davis intends to ground dialectics in action, in the immediacy of consciousness and the radical implications of truth as cyclic disaccord. To do so he explores the complexity of history, or memory, as a current event.

Interpretation of history is traditionally more an attempt to preserve or co-opt than an effort to revitalize. Dialectics challenges both static historicizing and future wishing for their attempts to avoid the fray of rational polemic's struggle with the processual decay of immediacy. Davis offers the reader an opportunity to initiate a "concrete dialectic," an argument of intellectual complexity and emotional charge. Davis' contextually immediate "interrogations," (p. 3) of history maintain a disruptive, contentious engagement of Hegel, Heidegger, Marx and Freud. He does not

intend to encapsulate or meliorate for a tamer audience the painful controversies, losses and paradoxes which galvanized these thinkers. Davis' intention is to produce a text which perpetuates these actions in the reader as well as in himself. Dialectic interpretations of philosophy can take on metatheory as a crafted series of psychological defenses which both moves toward the conflict/question at hand and also elides it. Davis exposes this process in his subjects' texts which necessarily thrusts him, and the reader, into a "hermeneutics of engagement" (p. 5): the situated immediacy of one's own analysis.

Hegel

Davis interrogates Hegel's descriptions of struggle between reflection and experience. Hegel considered reflection to be consciousness' method of contact with, and influence on, events. A conceptual force maintained by reflection is the self-confirming logic of the cogito and its abstract reification in rationalism. Yet, the experience of reflection's "doubling" self-investigations can transform rationalism into dialectic cycles of analytic process. Hegel's struggle was with reflection's conceptual use in conflicting ways: as able to rationally abstract experience, to become experience, and even to transcend mere descriptions of experience toward a higher order of being. Hegel's dialectic "solution" was to engage reflection as processual conflict able to bifurcate interdependent identifications for consciousness to call experience.

The phenomenological structure of conscious reflection engenders sets of competing attributions, e.g., mind/body, internal/external, master/slave, whose controversial intertensions define both the situatedness of the subject and his or her experience in the moment. In dialectics, rational logic takes on these arguments but not toward melioration, which would restrict both consciousness and experience. Dialectic interrogation intensifies one's contact with the struggle/anxiety which is experience. Such a methodology analyzes "subject," as increasingly complex interrogations delimiting self and other.

Davis is so positioned between deconstruction's endless and abstract deferral of submission to context and Kant's insistence on the security of the a priori. Davis reads Hegel's subject as "defined by the impossibility of achieving what it lacks, the status of a substance" (p. 46). Hegel thus sets a contemporary stage for the dynamic struggles of the post-structural and post-modern. Unhappy consciousness, stoicism and skepticism are promoted by Hegel as the slave's mature engagement of servitude. In addition, Davis exposes the resistance which enabled Hegel's monumental phenomenology while drastically abstracting and protecting him from the full force of his own immediacy in experience: Hegel's summary rationalism. By confronting subtle reifications in Hegel's logic Davis offers readers opportunity to strengthen the conflict field of their own immediate cycles of logic and affective valence.

Heidegger

Davis reads Heidegger's existentialism as an achievement of dialectic effort. Existentialism cannot be abstract and has no substantive a priori. When misinterpreted as a phenomenology of Being, or a path toward an inner core of the subject, it becomes reified. Existentialism is immediately an interrogation of subjectivity, actively present in questions of "who am I" and "what shall I do."

"Subjectivity exists in a process of becoming in which everything is at issue" (p. 109). In existential encounters the degradation of subject is held in dynamic

tension with the subject's inability to escape itself. The tragic and stoic position of Davis' dialectic is between process and determinism: neither the modern's facts (qua humanism) nor the post-modern's abstract negations of subject tap the vast complexities of the immutable yet processual field occurring between reflectivity and events.

In contrast to neo-Kantian anchors of the a priori in cognition (e.g., Habermas), Davis argues that an existential a priori cannot be constrained by cognition as it engages experience directly as it is lived and suffered. Put ironically, the existential a priori is anxiety itself which, at best, can cognize only as questions.

Existentialism ceases whenever anxiety is elided or sublated. In this sense, Heidegger struggled against Hegel's progressive evolution of dialectic which requires a system of logical progression and thus relative containment of anxiety. The existential point of view implicates a rupture, a burst of experience that requires no hierarchical lattice of rational forms. Heidegger's grasp at immediacy, however, also falters as text. Davis reveals Heidegger's own stylistic security in rationalism in which immediacy cycles to an abstract, analytic method, devoid of specific actions and ultimately Kantian in its dependence on analytic formalism. "As with Hegel, we read Heidegger best when we read against the grain, not toward a deconstruction of the text, but toward a discovery of a central contradiction that makes it possible to liberate a determinate meaning from his text that is other than the one its conceptual limits dictate" (p. 144).

Davis describes psychological agency as social *drama*. Reflectivity in existentialism questions itself through the hard, dramatic action of "reversal." Dramatic reversal employs contextually grounded reflective inversions to evade the reductive substantialism of neo-Kantianism, naturalism, behaviorism and determinism. It also refuses the abstract uselessness of deconstruction's "acting-out" attempts to escape context. "Dramatic agency, not substance, constitutes the identity of the existential subject" (p. 151).

At the core of psychological agency is an unremitting pressure to make *decisions*, the cognitive counterpart and cogenitor of emotion. Contrary to modernity's interpretation, existentialism refuses consciousness' mythology of an "internal" identity. Considering our emotions "private" is one hallmark of such distortions. In fact, emotions are concrete actions, situated in our field of experience and beckoning dialectic confrontation.

Marx

Marx argued for historical and social definitions of subject. He brought ideology to the problem of subject and revealed that individual "autonomy" functions as a conceptual shield masking the hegemonic "social" actions and political refusals which generate its fiction. Challenging the authenticity of this split between the individual and social-politic reveals histories themselves to be mechanisms of psychological defense.

Modernity's rational interpretations of Marx have invoked utopian, Platonic impositions of community structure both abstract and rigidly defended from the inherent conflicts of a reflective consciousness. Ironically, the modern's fictive reifications of Marx institute a bourgeois, isolate identity, shielded from the internal/external ideological conflicts defining its situatedness. Davis' interrogation of Marx makes clear that ideology permutes all constructs of subject destroying both historical and autonomous a priori havens.

Davis aligns with Marx's concepts of subject as an immediate effect of historical contingency. Accreting subject from the mutability of human memory is inevitably an act of ideology whose hegemony can either be defended as substantial and formal or challenged through processual transformations of analysis. A core Western mythic assumption has been that, "the identity of the self and the intelligibility of experience lie in correspondence to 'reason'" (p. 179). Davis positions his argument between neo-Kantian projects of propositional logic (as varied as Habermas and Althusser), which attempt to artificially limit the impact of ideology on reason itself, and Derrida's exposure of all languages of subject as housing essentialisms which fail before historical and grammatical scrutiny. Davis argues for a post-Marxist model of subject where rationalism, the communal and history are neither factual nor extrinsic. Rather, they organize *immediate* conflicts for a subject who is realized through interrogation. Hegel's inwardness of subject must confront Marx's social context and vice versa as the interrogator intensifies the stressors of one's own lived dialectic drama.

Reflection encounters its most dynamic purpose and complexity as *action*. With this perspective Davis gains a concrete dialectic understanding of the action of philosophy: "[philosophy] . . . gives us the clearest picture of the contradictions of its historical moment. Reading philosophy reveals, not what sovereign reason discovers as universally true, but where we stand in history" (p. 183).

Philosophy's failure through modernity can be found in its propositional abstractions. Most philosophies actively distance from what makes each model uncomfortable by erecting an ideology which also comprise the foundation stones of the author's psychological defense. ". . . [T]o understand oneself one must grasp the ways in which one's immediacy—one's feelings, opinions, experience, one's so called privacy—is a function of the contradictions of one's time" (p. 218).

Freud

Davis works his arguments with Hegel, Heidegger and Marx to invigorate Freud's model as a tragic drama where the self is its conflicts. Core to each self is its experience of "trauma," a dialectic event of loss and establishment. In psychoanalysis symptoms describe a subject's essential investments as well as losses. Even more, redundant symptoms are a gateway to the dialectic engagement of trauma where reflectivity comes closest to experience. Through trauma the past is reconstructed within frameworks of desire. Our recollections of trauma focus conflicts into immediate nodal exacerbations of experience and contingency. Experience-as-self gains its most potent voice between the conflicting identifications of victimization and authorship.

Freud's "neurosis" is revitalized by Davis as sourcing from an individual's attempt to intervene in the confusions of family. "Neurosis is always, initially, a legitimate act of protest" (p. 246). Neurosis' binding mechanism, repression, does not relieve or sublimate conflict; it increases conflict's range and investment as one's activities. "The unconscious is one term in a dramatic process where desire is the foundation of human agency and the repression of desire our primary mode of operation (p. 252) It is an evolving system of disclaimed acts, motives, desires, conflicts—and its structure corresponds to the life history of which it is the underside" (p. 255).

Psychoanalysis works to intensify the ability to take on conflicts, not in abstraction or intellectualization but through the tragic drama of experience. Such activity questions any momentary psychological assumption of cognitive or affective primacy

(i.e., is this quality of my experience due to a reason or a feeling?) by implicating the twisted cords of reason/affect in the conflict structure and problematic of reflectivity. A defining achievement and horror of human psychology is reflectivity and its core characteristics are its cognitive/affective capacities of conceptual inversion which play off of each other to maintain an interpretive field of experience for the subject.

Emotions in this model condense and displace their situatedness. To unpack anxiety and other affects is to explore their contexts. In post-Marxist terms, affect is an ideology drawing focus off of its historical contingency while presenting a gateway to interrogate experience as historical context. Affect is not a release of defense but rather is part of ego's active defensive structuring. Like all defensive operations it both obscures and gratifies its motivational arguments.

Davis organizes psychological defense mechanisms and their maintenance of repetition compulsions under the concept of "fractionation" (p. 258). Under fractionation the existential and dialectic complexity of trauma is closed-out and simplified in favor of repetitive, linear patterns of behavior. Fractionation skirts its own dynamism through freezing the cyclic process of reflectivity into the rigidity of mirror images. In arrested reflection both the rational logic and socialized emotions of consciousness are held out as stable foundations of an ego which is, in fact, attempting to meliorate its conflict base. The psychoanalytic interrogation of repression and its repetition compulsions doubles reflectivity upon itself constituting Davis' "active reversal" (p. 259).

"Active reversal" is an agonizing task of transitioning desire's over-investment in internal objects out toward the real world. History maintains dual roles in reversed reflectivity as both memorialized self-confirmation of stability *and* as an existential moment rewritten as fast as it is encountered. Such an activity cannot submit to any formalized notions of psychological determinism, nor to hollow expansions of a "conflict-free sphere" for an ego thinly cloaking powerful, and immoral, fantasies of free will.

Davis is critical of ego psychology and object relations schools as essentially fostering the intellectualized practice of fractionation in their promotions of mirroring (*qua* deficits), the healthy, autonomous and self-satisfied ego and friendly, process dampening notions like Winnicott's "good enough mother." He points out that such utopic rational goals conceal a gross recidivism rate in western psychotherapy. Within the American analytic field Davis most closely aligns with Schaefer's language of action and drama, yet he bases his thought far more deeply in conflict.

Contra American psychology, what the subject has lost is not its mother as object, but rather, itself. In this model it is precisely frozen, positive reflections that substantialize consciousness' emotions and prevent their analysis. The cogito and its affects play off each other in an abstract, ego-confirming tautology. Western therapies of the self and ego propose that the proper handling of emotions requires controlled, insightful abreaction and the cultural sedatives of balanced, homeostatic health. Penetrating this mirror fiction through "active reversal" places the subject in the immediate intensity of conflictual experience at the cost of imagined security.

Psychoanalysis is not an act of cognitive adjustment, attitude change, gestalt transcendence, object-constancy, nor emotional abreaction. Psychoanalysis is an act of dramatic immediacy where rationality and its emotions must work hard to encounter their paradoxical underpinnings.

Davis argues that psychoanalysis challenges the ego to recognize a co-generative interdependency between the super-ego and the id, thereby liberating the id's

artistry and allowing the super-ego to develop a morality and ethics of contingency. Necessary to this work is for ego to distinguish between the emotional character armor of its fractionation and the experience of core conflicts. The experience, or emotions, of core conflicts are neither a priori, "private" nor substantial. Rather, such work locates ambivalent, socially active "appeals and gestures" implicating loss.

Davis closes by distinguishing his "dialectics of situated subjectivity" from dialectics distorted by the rational paradigm of modernity into a counterfeit humanism. He is critical of structuralism's reification of dialectic into abstract binary logic which fosters its own tautologies. He is also critical of deconstruction's abject dependencies on structuralism's binary format for its artificially induced negations of content. Davis bases dialectics in process, immediacy and historical press. He feels dialectics has the capacity to intensify experience, as core conflict and self-knowledge, and reach beyond language to an immediacy of being neither complacent nor hegemonically socialized.

Davis takes the historical strains between determinism and agency, content and process, inwardness and the external (or historical contingency and processual immediacy), into dynamic, rupturing explorations of categories which provoke the reader's analytic process. His writing is elegant and energetic, saturated with stress, the heady rush of analysis and the challenges of hard work.

In his effort to detail core conflicts and the liberation of id/super-ego expression, and to ground dialectics in experience free of abstraction/neurosis, Davis encounters logical conundrums derived from his own rational polemics. For example, he constrains his consideration of the breadth of language phenomena to the domain of ego. This allows him to conceptualize an analysis which ruptures language, qua ego, as it encounters core conflicts of experience. Here, his lack of developed discourse with Lacan is noteworthy and problematic.

Davis is summarily critical and dismissive of Lacan whom he feels hypostatized the oedipal complex into a unilateral event where the symbolic could only be a conditioning patriarchy. Lacan's argument that language configures experience is interpreted by Davis to conscript Lacanian analysis to the internal, abstract and intellectualized domain of an ego chasing the circular tautologies of linguistic structuralism.

Freud's achievement was to reveal Western culture's charade of constrained sexuality. He expanded sexuality into a psychodynamic interpretive logic whose endless differentiations attempt to engage all that sexuality was considered not to be: i.e., sexuality's *ex*-perience, or, the unconscious. Davis also asserts sexuality as identity's broadest conceptual arena where affect and cognition reveal their historical contexts, interpersonal motives and social conflicts as insubstantial determinants.

Lacan, following Freud, expanded modernity's impoverished view of language as merely an abstract rational tool describing experience. By linking the uses and forms of language with psychodynamic sexuality, language structure was radically reorganized as a dialectic interpretive logic able, like Freud's sexuality, to engage its *ex*-perience. Lacan's conflictual psychodynamic expansion of language structure does not promote structuralism, formalism, or any rational ideology including the modern's static false-patriarchy.

A paradox is evident regarding any theory's ability to conceptualize beyond its borders towards realms of experience, core conflicts, self-recognition or being. Each individual's interpretive attempts imaginatively fixate on the existence they are not. This toil of consciousness concretely demarcates dialectic struggle and the

powerful rational appeal of the illogic of the a priori which offer mirages of leisure amidst hard work. Reading Lacan "against the grain" can evade the structuralist and mystic formula of his epigoni to encounter a reflectivity and a symbolic of radically challenging proportions and intentions. Lacan may be Davis' most potent counterpart and adversary.