

**FROM ROMANTICISM TO POSTMODERNITY: TWO
DIFFERENT CONCEPTIONS OF NATURE IN JULIAN
BARNES' *A HISTORY OF THE WORLD IN 10½ CHAPTERS***

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ABSTRACT

This paper argues for assessing Julian Barnes' treatment of the nature-theme in *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters* as Postmodern. It does so by analysing the ideological tensions that arise from its appearance in chapter 4; and by trying to account for their resolution in "Parenthesis", the novel's most authoritative chapter. The paper starts by presenting evidence for the fact that the tensions referred to are a commonplace in current feminist and ecological debates. Such evidence aims on the one hand at validating the thematic analysis, on the other at stressing that these ideological tensions are rooted in Modernity. To find a way out of the Modern aporias, this paper draws on the differences between Modern and Postmodern views on "nature"; as well as on their differing conceptions of the relationship between natural and human sciences. These differences provide a basis for establishing the degree to which the development of the nature-motif in "Parenthesis" is Postmodern or not.

This paper will analyse the tensions that arise in Barnes' treatment of the theme of nature in "The Survivor", the fourth chapter in his novel *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters*, and show how these tensions are finally resolved in "Parenthesis", the novel's most authoritative section. It will argue that despite chapter 4's Romantic conception of nature, which gives rise to such tensions, as a whole the treatment of this theme in *A History* crosses the threshold which leads from Modernity into Postmodernity.

The reason for choosing to analyse the difference between chapter 4 and "Parenthesis" treatment of the nature-theme stems from the fact that both chapters share one

feature missing in all the remaining chapters: both endings are happy ends, both afford the reader a glimmer of hope. This is all the more puzzling given Barnes' antithetical treatment of the nature-theme in these chapters. While in chapter 4, Kath "felt such love ... such happiness! Such hope!"; "Parenthesis" ends as it started, with the narrator lying close to his partner, feeling in love with her.¹ It is the aim of this paper to get to the bottom of this antithesis. To do so, it will start by analysing the thematic structure of chapter 4.

Chapter 4 is about a woman, Kath, who turns her back on civilization and its disastrous effects on the world. Instead, she tries to find redemption by going back to nature: "We all crawled out of the sea once, didn't we? Maybe that was a mistake. Now we are going back to it ... We're going to give ourselves back to nature now" (94, 97).

Thus Barnes takes up the age-old dichotomy of culture and nature. He sets up the notion of a dominating and destructive civilization by surrounding it with certain key concepts. First of all, society is *masculine*. Masculinity invades even such a harmless myth as that of Father Christmas who, to pull his sleigh, "ran an all-male team ... Typical. Absolutely bloody typical" (83). Society is also *scientific*—"we [humanity] just sail on by relying on our machines" (96)—which works in the interest of capital: it is because "the Norwegian butchers didn't do such good business" that "One day it's harmful to eat meat with 600 becquerels in it, the next day it's safe with ten times that amount" (86). The final concept allied to civilization and destruction is *history*:

I look at the history of the world ... [and] All I see is the old connections, the ones we don't take any notice of any more because that makes it easier to poison the reindeer ... they always make it sound so simple. Names, dates, achievements. I hate dates. Dates are bullies. (97, 99)

Against this scientific, male-dominated civilization (henceforth it will be referred to as "*SMD*" *civilization* or *culture*), Barnes sets up the concepts of *femininity* and *nature*: "... maybe women are more in touch with the world ... women are more closely connected to all the cycles of nature and birth and rebirth on the planet than men ..." (89). Both femininity and nature are being victimized by civilization: Greg is just as much in favour of castrating cats as he occasionally indulges in slapping his wife (88).

The trouble with thematic analyses is that it is difficult to validate them completely from within the text.² It is therefore useful to leave the text for a while and try to validate the present thematic structure by contrasting it with current ecological and feminist issues. The dichotomy of chapter 4, in which women and nature face a similar aggression—male scientific domination—finds close parallels in present society. As current ecological political practices show, solidarity of feminine and ecological critique against the common enemy—identified in the following quote as masculinity, science and capitalism—is more than just a commonplace; it is a necessity. Ecological movements make

explicit the link between the domination of nature and human domination, arguing that the "internal ecology" of social relations parallels the interactions of the ecosystems. Consequently, its programme is antinuclear, feminist, and calls for limits on economic growth. (Aronowitz *Science and Power* 315)

Moreover, the main character's rejection of history also corresponds to deep-seated feminist practices in real life. Since Walter Benjamin's recognition that history is written by the victors, "the hidden story of women's struggles for equality and escape from the yoke of male domination has to be told by other women who will explore the underside of dominant narratives" (Aronowitz 22). Thus, Barnes' position coincides with current views in society on the twin dichotomy between male and female on the one hand, and civilization and nature, on the other.

But there is a problem with the feminist position which also turns up in Barnes' own treatment of nature in chapter 4. It arises from the fact that

sex and gender relations are deeply rooted in the ideology of Western culture, inscribed in its most prominent works—that woman is other, is identified with nature, and is the object of domination. (Aronowitz 23)

According to this view, it is not women who choose to abandon SMD culture, but males who oust them alongside nature. Thus the longed for return to nature, the abandonment of science in the pursuit of a better world, might turn out to be a dead-end, it is not so much a reaction against SMD culture as its logical consequence.

In chapter 4 of *A History*, this dead-end appears in a tension which Barnes allows to take place but does not resolve. This tension arises when Kath regrets not having got pregnant before she left:

All these jokes from Greg about him being just an impregnator and I couldn't see what was obvious. That was what he was there for. That's why I met him. All that side of things seems odd now. Bits of rubber and tubes to squeeze and pills to swallow. There won't be any more of that any more. We're going to give ourselves back to nature now. (97)

In this passage the use of contraceptives symbolizes SMD society, while having sex the natural way, without contraceptives, so that Kath might get pregnant, stands for going back to nature. On the other hand, going back to nature in chapter 4 as a whole means the very impossibility of getting pregnant; the cul-de-sac of SMD civilization—here in the shape of contraceptives—finds its parallel in the dead-end of a nature which rejects a necessary element in the act of procreation: the impregnator. In the light of this contradiction, the "Survival of the Worriers" (97), i.e. women, turns out to be just as much of a chimera as Darwin's "survival of the fittest". The Gregs might die out because they mess up nature, but the Kaths won't fare better; in practice they are barren.

This very tension is given additional thrust if contrasted with Kath's threefold assertion that "everything's connected" (84,85,89). Kath's realisation is paradoxically instrumental in isolating her from all she was connected with: she turns her back on Greg, on civilization, but also on her own mind, and possibly on her own self, as her "mind was producing its own arguments against reality, against itself, what it knew" (100). The awareness that everything is connected leads Kath to break all her former connections.

To have Kath develop this double consciousness, Barnes plays with two areas of meaning inherent in the very word "nature". "Nature" can mean two things: on the one hand it can refer to "the essential quality and character of something" (Williams

Keywords 219); on the other hand it can mean “the whole material world, and therefore ... a multiplicity of things and creatures” (220). These two entries correspond to two distinctive areas of meaning: whereas the former refers to “a specific singular” (220) to the exclusion of other singulars —henceforth this meaning will be referred to as *nature*, without capitals— the latter makes reference to “abstract singulars” (220), i.e. it establishes a quality shared by all the members of a group, without putting this group in opposition to anything else —this meaning will from now on be called *Nature*, with capital “n”.

Throughout *A History*, Barnes uses both areas of meaning. In chapter 8, “Upstream”, for instance, he refers to Nature. He has Charlie, the main character, see the natives “naked as nature intended” (196). But generally he is more interested in *nature*. Thus in chapter 1:

We [animals], for instance, are always ourselves: that is what it means to be evolved. We are what we are, and know what that is. You [human beings] don't expect a cat suddenly to start barking, do you, or a pig to start lowing? But this is what ... [we] ... learned to expect from your species. One moment you bark, one moment you mew (28)

“We are what we are” refers here to the essential quality and character of animals, i.e. to their nature. By making use of this meaning, Barnes can state that animals and human beings have both unique characteristics which define them and mark them off from each other.

Barnes “preference” for nature arises from the fact that large parts of *A History* are devoted to an inquiry into what it is that specifically makes us human. In chapter 2, for example, the difference between animals and human beings is that “In the last analysis, humans were capable of altruism. This was why he was not a monkey” (53). “Parenthesis”, the main section of this world-history, implicitly gives its definition of human specificity: “Love and truth, that's the vital connection, love and truth” (238). Thus, whatever its content, Barnes is generally on the look-out for nature. Throughout *A History*, this emphasis generally creates no incompatibilities between nature and Nature as concepts; their cohabitation is a peaceful one.

However, in chapter 4, “The Survivor”, a paradox arises, for Barnes finds human nature, equated with feminine nature, precisely in Nature. For the main character to find herself, i.e. attain her specificity, Barnes is lead to deny nature by not drawing a line between one area of meaning and the other. He tries to merge both, but by bringing Kath closer to Nature he loses that which makes her different from it. Two questions arise then. The first is: is there any way out of the paradox marked by SDM culture on the one hand, and femininity and Nature on the other? The answer to that one cannot initially be provided by *A History* so much as by history. Only after this question has been answered and provided it has been answered in the affirmative can we ask our second question: does Barnes find his way out, too?

First, then to history. Kath's denial of nature and yearning for a merger with Nature has one clear historical origin, which is the Romantic period. According to M.H. Abrams, much of what he calls Romantic means the assimilation and reinterpretation of religious ideas within the binary system of subject and object, the human mind and its transactions with nature (*Natural Supernaturalism* 13). Romanticism, then, is “spilt religion” (68).

There is a simple reason for this search for new religions. Unlike their forebears, the Romantics lacked a metaphysical support in which fears could operate

in the context of a still powerful and vital religion, which incorporated the supernatural in a positive and life-enhancing form, and, so to speak, took care of primitive fears, cravings and guilts by means of its rituals and symbols, and the overall concept of a Saviour who took upon himself the world's cruelties and sufferings. (Ford 113)

Without religion, the individual is forced either to accept responsibility for his own actions, or to seek his salvation in a new axiomatic truth.

It follows that Nature could, in theory, have risen to the occasion and become a replacement for God, a new axiomatic truth. However, as Adorno and Horkheimer realised only too well in their *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, the main catalyser and alternative axiom of the weakening religious framework proved to be not Nature, but Enlightenment, understood in its broadest sense as reason (9); the age it gave rise to was Modernity. Unlike Nature, reason had the potential of inscribing itself in all social practices, of becoming the very cornerstone of society, not only in ideological, but in real terms (4).³ Other alternative axioms, Nature included, existed only at the fringes of reason, as reaction to and escape from its domination.⁴ Nature became thus one of the axiomatic truths of Romanticism, the movement which most fully impersonated the critique of reason during Modernity.⁵

As with any axiomatic truth, the trouble with an axiomatic Nature is that it has a reductive effect on the complexity and richness of human beings. Sure, we belong to Nature, but we are also different from it in crucial respects. As we saw before in passing, the difference between nature and Nature had been recognised by Barnes in chapter 1. It is thus a bit puzzling to find chapter 4 reverting to the axiom of Nature and even celebrating it by ending with a happy Kath who has found herself by reverting to a Natural stage (111).

Having found an answer to the origin and place of Kath's move back to nature, it now remains to be asked whether reason, this axiomatic truth which gave rise to an equally axiomatic Nature, is still our only truth, i.e. whether we are still Moderns. It is here that the concept of Postmodernity intrudes on us. It is variously claimed that our culture is not a Modern, but a Postmodern one. There are still controversies surrounding the legitimacy of this concept (voiced, for example, by Lyotard, Habermas, Adorno and Horkheimer), but one can argue that what is called Postmodern culture is best defined around the the problem of legitimizing axiomatic reason.

The problem of legitimation can best be understood by following through the development of the scientific *Weltanschauung*. With reason as its only axiom, society had in the natural sciences its closest ally.⁶ According to Popper, the methodology of science "reduces to two procedures: mathematical calculation and experimental validation / falsification of results" (Aronowitz 8). The first is supposed to ensure the rigour of investigation, to ensure that reason is firmly adhered to; while the latter purportedly establishes a link between reason and reality. Saving questions of style, this is probably the standard citation of the way science works in the context of Modernity.

However, this methodology is not validated both from "inside" science, i.e. actual experimental findings themselves; and from "outside" science, i.e. the way scientific thinking is nowadays believed to operate in general. From both points of view, Popper's

methodology appears to be theory-laden. The theory itself is roughly comparable to positivist premises, as it presupposes that through experiment we can observe all there is to an object. But we can argue from inside science that since Heisenberg's uncertainty principle positivism has breathed its last. His findings showed that

experiment cannot observe all that is presupposed in a field, and that thought can produce knowledge on the basis of warranted inferences. ... theoretical physics may posit phenomena for which the data not only are unavailable but cannot be observed or measured. (Aronowitz 241)

Heisenberg's insight opens up the way for epistemological and ontological relativism, so much so that after him it is not clear anymore whether relations are defined on the basis of substances, or substances on the basis of relations (Aronowitz 267).

In 1962 science's relativism was given an additional boost from outside with the appearance of Thomas S. Kuhn's now seminal *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. It restored to science its historical dimension by convincingly arguing that scientific advance is not a cumulative process, due to the fact that scientific progress necessarily involves both the complete overthrow of previously accepted theoretical frames within which science functioned, as well as their replacement by new frames. In other words, science does not exist within a vacuum, but is always context-bound, always theory-laden. Thus scientific progress is a revolutionary activity; it cannot rely solely on logical argument to carry the day (Kuhn 92-94). Reason alone does not ensure scientific validity.

Once the link between logic and the world —scientific experiment— has been severed, logic cannot be validated nor falsified and becomes a language among many others. Thus reason has been falsified by reason itself. The resulting absence of axioms gives rise to the problem of legitimation. This can be taken to be the defining characteristic of Postmodernism. The *Weltanschauung* it thus starts from is relativism.⁷

Having tried to answer whether there is a way out of Modernity, we can now return to Julian Barnes and analyse whether *A History* fits into Postmodernity. This paper argues that, while the treatment of the nature-theme in its fourth chapter is definitely Romantic and thus belongs to Modernity, "Parenthesis" gainsays this Romantic attitude and develops the theme of nature from a Postmodern perspective. The twin opposition of male/female and nature/civilization exists here, too, but never to the point of incompatibility. Male and female are different, and the metaphor Barnes uses to sketch out this difference (which appears in the next quote in italics) links femininity with, and opposes masculinity to, Nature:

Our nights are different. She falls asleep *like someone yielding to the gentle tug of a warm tide*, and floats with confidence till the morning. I fall asleep more grudgingly, *thrashing at the waves*, either reluctant to let a good day depart or still bitching about a bad one. (223)

On the other hand, sometimes "she has to stroke the horror away from me" (223), while at other times "it's her sleep that's broken by a scream, and my turn to move across her in a sweat of protectiveness" (223). Male and female are indeed different, but in their difference they also complete each other. In "Parenthesis" Barnes does

not try the easy way out by forgetting to face the feminist view of SMD society and the resulting yearning for Nature:

The feminist looks for examples of disinterested behaviour in the animal kingdom, sees the male here and there performing tasks which in human society might be characterized as “female”. Consider the king penguin: the male is the one that incubates the egg ... knowing my sex as I do, I’m inclined to doubt the latter’s motivation. The male penguin might just have calculated ... might just have worked things out to his own convenience. (232)

Society *is* male-dominated. On the other hand, in “Parenthesis”, the gap civilization opens up between male and female can be bridged.

The difference in treatment between “Parenthesis” and “The Survivor” is closely related to the difference holding between earlier and current theories of natural and human sciences. Until recently, a radical difference was posited between both kinds of science. For Mikhail Bakhtin, one of the main theorists in this field during the first half of the twentieth century, the difference is articulated as follows: the natural sciences have their ultimate criterion in a total identification between the object and its description; for the human sciences, on the other hand, it is depth which is required, for “The object of the human sciences is *expressive* and *speaking* being. Such a being never coincides with itself, that is why it is inexhaustible in its meaning and signification” (Todorov *Mikhail Bakhtin* 23-24). From the point of view of the natural sciences, the difference is again based on positivistic premises, i.e. the assumption that things can be known for what they are, and that the natural sciences provide the proper methodology for this knowledge.

But as was argued in the definition of Postmodernity given before, these positivistic premises have been given the lie in our times: no discourse can completely describe its object, so that nowhere, not even in the natural sciences, is it possible to dispense with the point of view of the observer, the human subject, for the sake of absolute objectivity. Even the natural sciences have a hermeneutic dimension which requires a certain degree of interpretation (Küng 160).

If the difference between the object under scrutiny, human beings in the social sciences and things in the natural sciences, cannot any longer be viewed as a radical and qualitative one—precisely because of Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle—our notion of society will benefit if it is extended to nature, to the material world which surrounds us. Otherwise we risk forgetting that “horizon of understanding” of nature, which helps us to see it as something more than just a dead thing we can misuse at will. This is basic ecological thinking and precisely what Barnes is trying to show in chapter 4. By having Kath revert to Nature, Barnes gives the lie to the radical distinction between the living, human world on the one hand, and the dead, material world, on the other.

However, on her way to Nature, Barnes loses Kath’s nature, and this is the charge that a total identification of nature and Nature has to face. Equation is as little of a solution as radical distinction. Therefore, if on the one hand it is true that every natural science has a horizon of understanding, a hermeneutic dimension, and every social science a horizon of explanation, it is not less true that explaining predominates in the first area and understanding in the second (Todorov *Literature and Its Theorists* 87-8).

To find out whether chapter 4's Romantic aporia holds for the whole novel, it will have to be compared with the way Barnes develops this theme in "Parenthesis". The reason for this comparison is simple: "Parenthesis" is, without doubt, the novel's most important and authoritative section. This novel being a history in 10½ chapters, it is divided in eleven sections of more or less equal length, of which only one, "Parenthesis", is not headed by a chapter-number. Given this apparent oversight plus Barnes' reoccurring assertion throughout the novel that "famous —always famous men, I'm sick of famous men— made events happen" (97), it is only fitting that its main and most authoritative section should be its humblest in appearance. Moreover, "Parenthesis" main theme being "love", its claim that "the history of the world ... only stops at the half-house of love to bulldoze it into rubble" (238) is an obvious way of legitimating this chapter as the novel's crucial half-chapter. In case that was not enough to establish "Parenthesis" authority, it is only here that Julian Barnes identifies with the text by establishing his credentials as narrator: "For a start, [poets] own that flexible 'I' (when I say 'I' you will want to know within a paragraph or two whether I mean Julian Barnes or someone invented" (225).

In "Parenthesis", Barnes tries to give sufficient autonomy as well as interdependence to nature and Nature, and does so in a series of paradoxical statements. To start off, Barnes defines both nature and Nature: human nature is "Love and truth, that's the vital connection, love and truth" (238); whereas Nature, defined negatively as "the exercise of power, dominance and sexual convenience" (232), stands for instinctive behaviour.

On the one hand in this chapter nature moves towards Nature; love partakes of the instinctual. The narrator offers ample proof for the fact that "love has roots below the gum of consciousness" (224): the narrator's beloved does a loving gesture "without waking", "unconsciously"; and yet "she senses" (224). Also, the narrator's statements that "I feel a shudder of love" and "she's touched some secret fulcrum of my feelings for her" (224), both show love being expressed in physical terms. This connection is carried further by using the heart of a "real" ox to symbolize love: "We frequently lost our way in this compacted meat. The two halves did not ease apart as I'd fancifully imagined, but clung desperately round one another like drowning lovers" (236). Nature, pure instinct, not only moves closer to love, but also to truth:

Lying in bed, we tell the truth: it sounds like a paradoxical sentence from a first-year philosophy primer. But it's more (and less) than that: a description of moral duty ... Tell the truth with your body even if —especially if— that truth is not melodramatic ... Sex isn't acting ... sex is about truth (238-9).

On the other hand, love, i.e. nature, does not equate with instinctual behaviour or Nature. Sex might be about truth, but love is also different from sex: "Sexual desire would be much easier if we didn't have to worry about love" (234). Instinctual attraction on its own is just not enough:

They teach kids how to cook and mend cars and fuck each other without getting pregnant ... but what use is any of that to them if they don't know about love? They're expected to muddle through by themselves. Nature is supposed to take over, like the automatic pilot on an aeroplane. Yet Nature, on to whom

we pitch responsibility for all we cannot understand isn't very good when set on automatic. (229)

This then is our first paradox. Given Barnes' rejection of a Romantic understanding of nature and Nature (and therefore male and female), and its replacement by a Postmodern view, the accompanying themes which completed the thematic pattern in chapter 4 —science and history— are to a certain extent reshuffled within this structure. Again, Barnes tries to overcome his skepticism towards SMD society not so much through forgetfulness as through juxtaposition of contraries. There are inherent paradoxes in "Parenthesis" treatment of science and history.

As regards science, Barnes states that particle physics provides "a false conceptual model" (230) for understanding the nature of love, and that love is "anti-mechanical, anti-materialist" (242). The keyword to this paradox is the word "anti-mechanical": science provides a false conceptual model of love if conceived in Newton's mechanistic terms. It was this mechanistic vision of reason which Romanticism tried to escape from. In this sense, if "the atomic reaction you expect [love's ability to make each other happy] isn't taking place", it is not so much because science in itself provides a false conceptual model, but because "the beam with which you are bombarding the particles is on the wrong wavelength" (230).

From a Postmodern perspective one cannot blame science for being on the wrong wave-length; Postmodernity has to take into account that science has a hermeneutic dimension. Therefore we also know that there are different wavelengths with which to bombard the object of our love. Thus Barnes does not seem to be condemning science per se, but only its mechanistic version. Thus for establishing truth Barnes accepts that there is not one logic; rather, there are solutions which are logical and unconvincing, and others which "are equally logical, and more persuasive" (231). Logic, i.e. reason, is one language among others.

The paradox in Barnes' treatment of history is equally there. On the one hand

History isn't what happened. History is just what historians tell us ... We make up a story to cover the facts we don't know or can't accept; we keep a few true facts and spin in a new story round them. Our panic and our pain are only eased by soothing fabrication; we call it history. (240)

But unlike chapter 4, dates are not just seen as bullies, for

There's one good thing I'll say about history. It's very good at finding things. We try to cover them up, but history doesn't let go. It's got time on its side, time and science. However ferociously we ink over our first thoughts, history finds a way of reading them. (240)

But in this case the paradox is not a real one, as the balance is tipped one way. "Parenthesis" ends with an indictment of history: "when love fails, we should blame the history of the world ... our love has gone, and it is the fault of the history of the world" (244). Thus Barnes, contrary to his usual practice in "Parenthesis", chooses to emphasize the negative aspects of this particular paradox.

There is a simple explanation for Barnes' unresolved tension in his treatment of history. We should not forget that for Barnes, art means

Truth to life, at the start, to be sure; yet once the process gets under way, truth to art is the greater allegiance. The incident never took place as depicted ... As [the artist] approaches his final image, questions of form predominate (135)

If we take into account that for Barnes form plays such an importance in artistic production; if we further remind ourselves that the title of the novel includes the word "history" and not nature, femininity, or any of the other concepts discussed in this paper; then Barnes has every reason to maintain this particular tension, even if it is at the price of avoiding the resolution of one of the Romantic aporias chapter 4 had posited. Similarly, the contradiction between this chapter's and "Parenthesis" happy end on the one hand, and their antithetical treatment of the theme of nature on the other, could be evaluated in the same way, not as a mistake but as artistic licence.

Despite this creative freedom, the fact remains that with "Parenthesis", *A History* has entered Postmodernity. In "Parenthesis" society may still be scientific, capitalistic and male-dominated; but it is also true that there is space for hope, as nature and Nature are no longer radically opposed to each other. Love, being both Natural and natural, unites human beings with Nature and each other. Without ceasing to have "roots below the gum of consciousness" (224), love is also "culturally reinforced" behaviour (233).

Notes

1. Although the nature-theme does also appear in chapter 8, this paper will not be dealing with chapter 8 except in passing, mainly for reasons of space, but also for two further reasons: for a start chapter 8 does not seem to raise issues additional to those handled in chapter 4, it is even reductive in this respect (e.g. the association of nature and female is completely missing). But also, chapter 8 does not partake of that unique element which makes it worth to compare "Parenthesis" and chapter 4: it does not end on a happy note.
2. This has a lot to do with the fact that while thematic structures do not dispense with syntagmatic indices —i.e. indices present in the text, they also draw heavily on paradigmatic indices— i.e. the collective memory. (see Todorov *Symbolism and Interpretation* 30-2) In other words, more often than not, thematics occurs also at the intersection of the text with our experience of the world. It is therefore not only legitimate, but indeed necessary, to validate a thematic analysis by comparing it with the ideological debate of its time.
3. In Adorno and Horkheimer's own words: "Beide Begriffe [Aufklärung und Wahrheit] sind dabei nicht als bloss geistesgeschichtliche sondern real zu verstehen. Wie die Aufklärung die wirkliche Bewegung der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft als ganzer unter dem Aspekt ihrer in Personen und Institutionen verkörperten Idee ausdrückt, so heisst Wahrheit nicht bloss das vernünftige Bewusstsein, sondern ebensowohl dessen Gestalt in der Wirklichkeit" (4).
4. "in the world of 1789-1848 ... there was only one *Weltanschauung* of major significance and a number of other views which, whatever their merits, were at bottom chiefly negative critiques of it: the triumphant, rationalist, humanist 'Enlightenment' of the eighteenth century. Its champions believed firmly ... that human society and individual man could be perfected by the same application of reason" (Hobsbawm *The Age of Revolution* 285-6).

5. Nature's axiomatic character is backed up by the historical development of nature into Nature. The latter developed from the former during the seventeenth century and became abstract, because what was being sought was a single universal "essential quality or character". This is structurally and historically cognate with the emergence of *God* from a *god* or the *gods*. Abstract *Nature*, the essential inherent force, was thus formed by the assumption of a single prime cause. (Williams 220)
6. Again, quoting Adorno and Horkheimer: "Denken ist im Sinn der Aufklärung die Herstellung von einheitlicher, wissenschaftlicher Ordnung" (88).
7. The definition of Postmodern relativism forwarded here could easily be interpreted as being simplistic and reductive. However, if such an effect is achieved, it will only be due to the shortness of this paper. For a fuller account of the current implications of the concept of Postmodernity, see Küng's *Theologie im Aufbruch*. Summarising, one could say that for Küng the relativisation of totalitarian reason puts the stress not on "reason", but on "totalitarian" (21). Reason may now be a language among others, but it remains a language nevertheless. Also, Küng's awareness of the fact that Postmodernity is a paradigm which has little more than started makes him recoil from labelling Postmodernity in any simple and reductive way. According to him, Postmodernity can only be made justice if it is accepted as a "heuristic concept" (17), a concept whose main definition is that it still awaits definition. Until this happens, relativism may still be used as keyword.

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