

BLITHE POWER, TORTURED HISTORY: A NEW KEY FOR EFFECTIVE ACTION

SYNOPSIS / TABLE OF CONTENTS

This book begins with a close consideration of a fundamental issue of world history, namely, the mustering of sufficient grounds or reasons for effectively dealing with the world. In the course of that beginning, it listens carefully to the attempts in this area by three prominent thinkers of the recent past, Martin Heidegger, Edmund Husserl and Jacques Derrida..

From there it proceeds to work through factors of intentional consciousness misplayed by the three abovementioned stalwarts and ignored by a surprising percentage of the population. Along the way, it draws upon the efforts in this regard by novelist, Marcel Proust, physicists, Stephen Hawking, Albert Einstein, Werner Heisenberg, John Gribbin and David Darling, choreographers, George Balanchine and David Parsons, graphic designer, A.M. Cassandre, composer, Olivier Messiaen, Bill Evans, jazz pianist and composer, and film directors, Michelangelo Antonioni, Robert Bresson, Robert and Luc Dardenne, Agnes Varda and Billy Wilder.

The work comprises 327 pages and runs to about 170,000 words . It is organized as follows:

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INTRODUCTION

From the outset this work [of Heidegger] vigorously contests the traditional installation of lucidity by way of that mode of thinking by “reasoning,” by reasons or grounds “standing under” aspects of a world thus understood as informational. Heidegger’s innovation consists of a drastically athletic sense of the standing under of understanding...

Any mobilization on behalf of “reasons” for a state of affairs in fact touches upon the “grounds” or “causes” of that event. To fully possess the question-sphere, is to engage “sufficient reason.” That sufficiency entails a “transcendence” of oneself such that one’s finite responsivity creatively informs the ground itself. The repertoire of human powers includes an ignition service for primordial origination. One can imagine Husserl collapsing into a rack of test tubes on delivery of such a birthday gift; but in fact Heidegger recycles so much expository landfill as to dull any startling effect.

On attaining to such flickering illumination as shown above, *The Principle of Reason* imposes a patented blackout along lines of an imagined “dispensation” or “destiny” of estrangement within which the prolonged “incubation” of the power of the principle of reason welters.

Entailed within the burgeoning of thoroughgoing skepticism is an uprising of dissent—personal and public—such that the utopian fantasizing of Hegel and Heidegger (along lines of a cabalistic glide into momentousness) represents impudence.

Deploying the monadology, Heidegger broaches a variable living up to the sufficing unity welling up for an entity in drive. “Apperception,” being awake to one’s engagement by one’s ground, entails being effectively interconnected with others. The striving process at the core of sufficiency is, therefore, a divided engagement, implying a subtle accomplishment in maintaining unity.

The... note, as to *physis*' being *a-letheia*, "truth" in the sense of performing a dis-closure in a process of "non-retreat," is quite incomprehensible in the context of steadfast misplaying of the intentional dimension.

Such skirmishes with Heidegger's waywardness as we have enacted in this introductory moment serve to spotlight areas requiring articulation doing them justice. The perverse dividedness of the essays as to sufficing introduces an example of the devious so extreme as to make one hesitate about drawing any general conclusions regarding the severity of the issue. Certainly Heidegger is at great pains to tranquilize phenomenality only too salient. By truncating the intentional possibilities briefly hinted at, in the course of electrifying the history of Western thought, the *Denken* spares itself the task of keeping up with great subtleties and dangers.

Although a stunningly unreliable guide into the territory of free reciprocation to the love of a diffident, sharing manifestation of power, Heidegger had a long and rich experience of that domain and we would do well to reflect for some time, in what follows, upon the nightmarish floundering of his explorations there...

The stately lawlessness, by which Heidegger handles demands for a full coherence, impels an effort on behalf of plenitude to examine closely the phenomena so punishing to his openheartedness.

Though under fire from the same quarter felling Heidegger et al, Marcel Proust, an unlikely warrior to be sure, has gone to the trouble of outfitting his effort, *Remembrance of Things Past*, with resources more suitable to the challenge (as a result of discerning rather well the problematicness of the challenge). Far more skeptical about religion, science and humanism than his academic colleagues, Proust, as we shall see, made headway (qualified headway) in competently engaging the output of fundamental power (grounds).

CHAPTER ONE

As so often, a saying of Heraclitus would seem to have got it right.

"War is both king of all and father of all, and it has revealed some as gods, others as men; some it has made slaves, others free."

The first war to face is the lifetime struggle to keep the flame of uncanniness alight within the riptide into canniness. The second war involves dealing with a history of testy oblivion. This latter, many-pronged assault constricts the bid for expansiveness almost to the point of collapse. Its banking upon strength in numbers and a fate of suffocating isolation for anyone daring to demur, issues forth a context of intimidation designed to grind down any interests not onside. That is to say, interests similarly deranged but committed elsewhere within the menu of canny havens. What this more or less covert hostility means to a contrarian possibility not even suspected by the venerable pursuits is a world-historical involvement of sharply lowered expectations.

CHAPTER TWO

Those who are already royally resentful toward reality itself could not be expected to show any patience toward the *hoi polloi*. The peevishness of Heidegger's response to carnal freedom would leave him well-disposed to the *modus operandi* of Nazi persuasion.

Also like Heidegger, the Husserl of the *Crisis* would introduce, in the course of incisive illumination of an originary intentionality, factors—here persistence of individual human identity as “ego”—which readily (and gratifyingly) decay in their coverage of distinguished phenomenality.

Like Heidegger, Husserl was stricken to the core by torrents of sufficing which he could not stomach. Like Heidegger, he was most agile in systematically installing his nightmare as an engine to propel his invalid's dream to undreamed-of levels of effervescence. Like Heidegger, then, this pious little man had embarked upon the life of a *bandito*.

It is an article of dogma for Husserl that sensual intentions never include that of doing justice to their originary power.

In the keynote lecture, published under the title, *On Spirit*, Derrida performs a surveillance of the Heideggerian keyword, “spirit,” throughout the *Denken*, thinking to discover, in variations thereby, hidden truths. Since Heidegger has indeed much to hide within the wretched onto-theo-logic, it could be said that the bad odor emanating from the desperate games-playing on behalf of a dispensation of being has, in Derrida, brought forth a gamester on the make.

CHAPTER THREE

Proust's narrator/protagonist is distinctive in being lucid about a fault-line underlying commonsensical experience, susceptible to the opening up of an abyss of sufficiency.

To reiterate a problematic for *Remembrance of Things Past*...the phenomenon of love is an unruly alien within Proust's enterprise, which ...regards all interpersonal action as an assault upon true focus, and, at best, footage for subsequent, solitary discoveries.

It is not only a case, therefore, of displaying the ruin into which a primordial issue leads, but also suggesting individual shortcomings within that initiative. Thereby, some kind of hedging of the determinist thesis of oblivion would appear to be in play.

Amidst such evidence of the dismaying juggernaut of human manifestation, Proust stitches together a rationale for the edifying disclosure constituting his novel.

The mobilization toward efficacy violates the narrative's sureness of touch in disclosing suspenseful, richly problematic intentionality of historical action.

The discrepancies we have just noted cannot be ascribed to carelessness. Proust's novel is brilliantly constructed and a paragon of subtlety. It is, however, conspicuously *not* the enthused-over compendium of ideas and laws which would instill in a reader a primordial sense of beauty, love and power. *Remembrance of Things Past* is a compelling manifestation of a deadly viscosity about human life, which confronts every individual with a difficult deployment of freedom to maintain a nourishing dynamic. That latter consideration casts a skeptical shaft upon the unilateral declaration of a world of paralysis, to be offset by the conjuring of tiny vital signs.

The novel finds its way into a historical disposition undermining its fertile acts. There is evidence that Proust is quite aware of a universe of originary power unexplored by his effort, a universe in which literary genius would play a far more modest role than he was wont to covet.

CHAPTER FOUR

Impelled by originary love to proffer beauties of sensuous emergence of oneself and of one's originary outreach to the world, an individual becomes a persona in a sustained action dedicated to sufficient ongoing (historical) ground.

A prospecting subject, hungry for treasure and stung by setbacks and obstacles recorded upon the scoreboard that socioeconomic history erects to delimit sufficiency, offers itself as the bedrock of human existence. Within the phenomenality of that offer, there strikes, from another bedrock, like the onset of food poisoning, a realization that something about the spectre posing as one's real presence is drastically erroneous.

The genius of Christianity consists in its deployment of the phenomenon of love. The desperate premise of loving a supernatural humanoid translates in action as a cherishing of sensuous phenomena.

The most telling self-exposure submitting social experience to natural scientific method, and one that sets the tone (however unbeknown) for subsequent humanist politics, is the "Utilitarian" doctrine presented by Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832). Bentham's scientism takes the form of favouring actions on the basis of a "hedonic calculus," which presumes to know the standing of intentions in terms of "units" of pleasure or pain they

cause. The overriding moral principle (the “greatest happiness principle”) would be to aim for the greatest happiness (i.e., the greatest amount—units—of pleasure) for the greatest number.

It [science] rests its case for world-historical integrity upon a bedrock of conceptual and mathematical precision about which, it supposes, no sane individual could make trouble. Whereas the sufficiencies promoted by religion and humanitarianism are thunderously questionable and therefore have to be sustained by all manner of coercive partisanship, the laws of science exert their own quiet control.

However, exponents of the rational sufficiencies of science, fortified by centuries of progress in disclosing basic features of the universe and in producing enhancements for human experience, tend, in our time, to engage outstanding issues of explication not merely with zeal for knowing the hitherto unknown but with a patronizing contempt and muted impatience toward those not demonstrating what it takes to be one of the masters of world history.

CHAPTER FIVE

It would be stretching the point to suggest that Hawking’s work categorically repudiates the mechanistic rendition so beloved by Einstein. He does indeed take exception to a universal mechanism under an exclusive jurisdiction of relativity theory. Something not fully articulated about quantum mechanics leads him to deploy it as a spanner in the engineering of Einstein’s causal palace. But this skeptical instinct, although fruitful as physics, serves to heighten a malaise with the forfeiture of such understanding to reflective associates—however estranged—of Bertrand Russell.

As against Bacon’s omnipresently authoritative distribution of causal powers, Hawking maintains an entirely phenomenal sense of ground, and thereby challenges not only the undertaking of magic, but also (at a level not yet articulable) that of science.

Because physics occupies itself with the same province of substantial entities which has encouraged a theology of First Cause, Hawking is quick to contend against “God” as a provision of sufficient ground, by reason of the proposal of imaginary time which brings to light a universe having no “boundary,” no beginning, no end. As a physicist, however, he is ill-equipped to manage another imperative registering within the so-called quantum theory of gravity, namely, provision of sufficient ground a propos of phenomenality which the history of natural science has oversimplified. Of course the readily predictive sphere constitutes that tangibility which physics has taken upon itself to rule. But full phenomenality consists of another region, in subtle, delicate and prevailing play with brutal manifestation. Hawking, almost alone among his peers, is troubled, however vaguely, by that kind of superstructure.

One notable demurrant against the earnest focus group discussing “the question of why it is that we and the universe exist” would be the bold nemesis of Bertrand Russell. She would see right through the timorous impertinence of such a congregation of continuing-education acolytes in their endless supplication before the altar of rationalist cleverness. Hawking’s spill must be seen as linked to a tradition whose self-overestimation does not merely pose a lacuna within the orbit of cultivating originary power. The neglect of such a crucial dimension of phenomenality entails socially facilitated relentless hostility toward any intentional elicitation of uncanny sufficing. As such, it enforces an appalling simplism and distemper upon every endeavor on behalf of sufficient grounds. As if the warfare of one’s self’s lucidity were not challenge enough, in imperial science the

individual is confronted by tasks of coexistence with white-collar felons. On the other hand, notwithstanding the successes crowning that militancy, anyone essaying, along the lines of physics, the atypical aspiration articulated by Hawking has ahead of him a truly astronomical wait for that ship to come in.

Hallowed for so many centuries now, that programmatic modesty maintained by scientists, to the effect that human manifestation is, appearances notwithstanding, absolutely an arrangement by stupendous eventuation of nonhuman entities, harbors an almost undetectable self-centered aggressiveness. The tenet to the effect that intentional sentience steers forth by reason of aggregation, due to material disturbance, yielding “consciousness” does not simply acknowledge a major role of inertial factors in concrete experience, but, more to the point, it endorses an enslavement of human aspirations to sterile concussions. Reasoning along such lines—in wilful ignorance of their larger territory—has in play an appetite for reducing the self to a toy, and an appetite for waylaying anyone with scope beyond toyland. Engaging the phenomena of “blind forces” as they actually come forth introduces an indispensable factor of responsibility. Human carnal experience presents powerful physiological and environmental factors beyond the prevailing of individual motives. Our bodies thrive and decay, as does our planet, in amazing indifference to our efforts. But those efforts, however prone to ruin, entail phenomenal impacting quite equal to that of the precincts verging on monstrosity. It should be needless to say, that there is no manifestation of brutal nature disconnected from individual discernment as awash in effort. Extrapolation “backward,” from the phenomenal region of inertial mechanics to a land of nothing but mechanics is indulgence in nonevidential inference, which is to say, fantasy—a leap of faith or (when chronicling a chemical occupation of consciousness) revenge. To understand omnipresent mechanics one must understand omnipresent effort.

CHAPTER SIX

The dilemma ignited with human individuation is no mere confrontation of a poison to be expunged from one’s history. The projection into a mockery of what one can be is intrinsic to human experience. It endows one’s eventfulness with a problematic keynote, an exigency of tempering that lacklustre moment with a decisive lustre.

In the intentional process of thwarting by carnal action the lockdown of a persona, not only serious history becomes salient, but also serious finitude. As ushered into an effulgence of sensuous power, an alert intentionality attains to composure in dealing from strength with historical possibilities crowned with delight, and with the situation of being extinguished, thereby crowned with glee.

In the course of freely fulfilling its assignment to an infinitely fecund territory, finite intentionality maintains itself as a persona. A persona is not a mere self, a merely distinct and unique embattled identity. It is in essence a consort performing monumentally nuanced labors of love. As such it brings about a primordial history or saga.

If the gift of delight attains to major significance in face of perversities of intimate intention, it can be readily understood that that sustaining phenomenon for a positive correspondent comprises not only an indispensable compass but also a firewall amidst the pandemic of world historical engagements.

Elicitation of sufficient grounds comprises an expansive gusto encompassing love for others and love for that which sustains others and oneself. Such encompassment harbors a work of shifting and combining emphases. There is, about the ascending of intentional power, a persona straddling extra-earthly sensuality and most earthly sensuality. That range implies a deft mobility wherein uncanny individuation maintains a retainer upon intimate and public history.

How many are there who find employment in that workplace with its premium upon the packaging and not the product? Though no doubt overshadowed by simplistic motives of gorging oneself, filtering through the peacock-dance of public life are countless gestures launched for reasons largely unknown. Huge tracts of popular entertainment depend upon such throwaway moments to maintain a market share in catering to short and unscrupulous attention-spans. Despite the digitally enhanced stupidities of youth-targeted entertainments, its ludicrous-sounding conceit, that something is happening here which constitutes an important departure, is not entirely preposterous.

If we liken historical ambitioning to a two-way street in accordance with sustaining or suppressing sufficient grounds, we can observe in graphic terms the characteristic features of that movement. The route uphill would be sparsely populated, but would include many vehicles entering and departing at a dizzying rate. The route downhill would be bumper-to-bumper and would markedly include a homicidal species of road rage, whose practitioners would routinely cross the median to threaten those eschewing egoity, as working through an addiction to making losers of everyone else. Susan Sontag has helpfully spotlighted that venom with her thesis that, “The white race is the cancer of human history.”

The florid violence of that statement speaks to a convoluted invention available for the navigational needs of the downhill direction (and as such a cross-current to the stabilizing gifts operative for the uphill climb). Venerable, dense, often complementary historical cargos of Christianity (prototypical of religion in general), science and humanism can give rise to such intoxicating dicta as that opportunistic jag cited in the previous paragraph. Just as Christians readily imagine themselves to trump with a claim to immortality and scientists pride themselves upon a supposed mastery of the grounds of the phenomenal, humanitarian humanists exploit their intimacy with misfortune as an automatic weapon with which to mow down those showing motives indifferent to squalid misadventures. As a Jewish lesbian Sontag could and did wield a supposedly irresistible weddedness to “victims” in order to squelch not only otherworldly religionists and mechanistic scientists (who would, as the history of thought demonstrates, largely aid and abet the egoity-based egalitarian calculus of humanism), but also to give vent to a final triumphal solution to the whole occidental enterprise whose incisive subtleties elicited in her a murderous frenzy. On an unspoken pretext of Western history’s perfidious comportment toward Jews and homosexuals (as thereby joining throngs of Africans and Asians), Sontag relishes playing what she supposes to be an unstoppable gambit of promoting those who find themselves vulnerable. Under the auspices of such cheap (and thereby popularly impressive) sentimentalism, she imperiously gives a thumbs-down to Western accomplishments in the sciences and the arts as possibly sparing occidental history from liquidation.

Compounding the problematic of human efficacy is the physiologically-implicated condition of maturation. Not only does one confront warring of various types, but one must needs grow into readiness to cope with that originary test. The perils entailed in that developmental situation have been exposed with memorable force by filmmaker Robert Bresson’s classic, *Mouchette* (1967). The hour and a half of dismay elicited by depiction of

utter hopelessness in an adolescent girl's life derives its peculiar weight from, not the moral, social and political discernments (too) easily culled from its surface, but from an unleashing of wounding so extreme as to speak to primal (not personal) issues. The only two highlights on view—encased as they are in crushing destructiveness—attend to the protagonist's budding primordial allotment, as superseding any personal entitlement. A loving bond with her mother has been squashed into the form of mothering her baby brother and deathly ill and soon deceased parent. The wider context of a torturous poverty and a coldly brutal father demarcates the imprisonment blasting an emergence of her love for life. (The second upbeat, a turn, by way of a stranger's gift, to play amidst bumper cars and to flirt with a young man on the course, is intercepted by a beating from her father.) Wider still are the currents of petit bourgeois recoil from one so unkempt (caring overtures from whom she cannot negotiate) and lawless peasants by whom the mouchette (hedge-sparrow) is met with carnage and rape. Her suicide does not engage any crusade for social justice. Its fumbling elegance attends to a (potentially) terrible contingency about primal power.

Juxtaposition of Cassandre's brittle comportment, toward the subtleties of New York, with the visceral logic sustaining that wonder prompts a need for more precision about the carnal nature of fundamental competence. It can be imagined that, as far as recurrent patterns of devotion to originary uncanniness, Cassandre would muster more consistency than those who cover so much ground in Manhattan and distant points. The latter would not appear to harbor any commitment to unique resonance of manifestation. Much of their fulsome invention, affection and deftness would be lost to common one-upmanship and sentimental orthodoxy, not even possessing Cassandre's dangerously discriminating self-criticism. And yet, to a wide enough purview, a special urbanity does shine through from tenacity amidst actions easily assumed to be old-fashioned. That urbanity, with the exception of the Balanchine-Kirstein foundation, has been virtually inarticulate, a remarkable state of affairs for such an erudite population, but in complete accord with a founding phenomenon departing the broad swath of world historical erudition.

La Notte presents no sustained campaigns for sufficiency, and therefore the transparencies of struggle come to prominence by way of the scenario's skilful deployment of structural elements. The film is framed by two exceedingly disquieting scenes of individuals in the course of death throes. At the outset, a couple visits a writer friend in the hospital who is on morphine palliation, and remarks that the rare free time of recent days has yielded a sense of an avenue for exploration new to him. Early next morning, at the end of the concentrated narrative, that same pair come to terms with the end of their marriage. She reads to him a testimony to a love which does not own another but shares a great challenge. He has to be reminded that he was the author of that ode, prior to becoming a celebrity novelist. His protestations that love remains culminate with fiercely embracing her, forcing her to the sandy turf of the park setting, and the camera draws away from their writhings. Although she musters the presence of mind to terminate a lost cause, the course of the day discloses that she is at one with him in a confirmed cynicism and attendant gloom. In accordance with the protractedness of that distemper, their meanderings in Milano bring to light disconnection aplenty but no threads on behalf of finding a way. Accordingly, the preponderance of their actions is shot at some remove, with virtually no close-ups. (The superb, world-weariness specialists, Jeanne Moreau and Marcello Mastroianni, discharge this onerous function with an authority precluding overtaxing the viewer's concentration.) Many of the pithy situations are visited by her, including delicate handling of a forcefully textured material (in this case, a rusted piece of a building), abysmal outskirts of the city and decency in face of her former tutor's misery and the possibility of breaking up a brawl. Also present is slippage into cheap diversion, in the form of gawking at a fusillade set up by amateur devotees of rocketry. But without the factor of urgent motion in engaging a playable emergency, they emerge as squibs, each inconsequentiality fuelling a mounting toll of dead weight. Together they encounter at a nightclub a performance by an African woman stripper-contortionist whose impressive bodily control is (almost) completely overtaken by its format of tawdry stunt. The implication here for an appointment with truly wild sensuality is throttled by their deadpan adjudication and not at all activated by his patronizing remark, "She's quite good." (That afternoon they had descended upon the publisher's launch of his latest book, titled, *La Stagione* [The

Season]—perhaps holding forth, with some discomfort, upon the one-dimensionality to which his reflections have abandoned him—with an emotional investment more suited to shopping for clothes.) The next and last stop on their what-the-hell tour is the home of a wealthy industrialist who has an interest in the uninspired competence and PR instincts of the famous wordsmith. Now a big party at a vulgar suburban mansion apropos of being offered a position of company historian and staff relation's trouble shooter is, next to tying up the heroine on the railway tracks, one of the most readily interpreted gambits imaginable. And, sure enough, there is a healthy quorum of boozed-up bores, ditsy gals (young and old) and chicks being thrown into the pool. But on making his pitch to the writer, the tycoon refers to forming and operating a business as a creative effort and the writer makes an affable, though hardly sincere, observation as to the concreteness of practical constructs in contrast to the supposed void from which literature arises. Not only does the multimillionaire possess, against cinematic convention, some purchase upon poise and integrity, but his wife, on greeting the late and distant arrivals, refers to his work and replies to his question, "Have you read my books?" with, "I'm not so foolish as that." At the center of this hardly predictable household is the persona of their daughter, played by Monica Vitti. She is in the course of reading one of his books during the party when first noticed by the writer's wife while wandering about the unanimated region of the house, and when approached, with hopes of establishing a liaison, by the writer, she greets him with, "You're too old for me." With some surprise, we have entered close-up time, and her cajoling him into the above-mentioned board game upon checkered floor tiles—her little purse as the disc—brings about a consequentiality about goofing off. Attention to the sensuous factors of the cinematography leads to understanding that all bets are off in this eventuation about a poor little rich girl, only too susceptible to pat dismissal. In conversation with him, wherein he trots out sentimentally fetching, well-used nihilist repertoire, her body and voice present serious turmoil, as, filmed from behind, she remarks, "Sometimes I feel sad as a dog." As they bat around forgettable pensees about losing "heart," she hits him with, "You're weak, like me." And that raises the question, though there can be no doubt about his weakness, how weak, in fact, is she? She opines, like Proust, that interpersonal love is a trap, and then plays for him a tape of some literature having occupied rewards of solitude and silence in the face of a startlingly throbbing nature, about which it may be said that "everything" is intent upon glee. She admits to being the author, and in response to his wanting to hear it again, she deliberately erases it, by rerunning the machine. Around this time she indicates that with her family she enjoys hopping over to America to see hurricanes when in season. And filling out the picture of a constellation productive of an unstable urbanity, skimming with only slight control, she finds amusement in her mother's homily that staying indoors writing and reading most of the time is bad for her skin. (Purchase upon some degree of extemporaneous, playful intent may lurk in her response to his asking her age: "Twenty-one years, and many minutes.") While her engagement of sufficient grounds remains in play, he proves competent enough at defusing a fascist citation lobbed his way by a would-be suitor on returning to the party from a joyride with his rain-drenched wife, but lodged in a prison of secondary securements. On offering to help the soaked gadabout dry off, Vitti's presence of workable solicitude is repulsed by Moreau's flinty reserve and suspicion. The scene in question thereby offers a juxtaposition of functioning and dysfunctioning physicality. She sees them off with, "You two have exhausted me." But she has established a level of resilience, however endangered, in contrast to their absolute exhaustion.