

Rousseau's educational project would appear to be aimed at training the individual in "a healthy form of sociability," which Todorov regards as a special form of "wisdom" (65). As a practical skill, this "wisdom" does not assure the successful balance between individualistic and collectivistic forces a priori, but only a posteriori, i.e., only as the result of the individual's life-long application of its abilities for mediation. Rousseau's "third way" is risky and unstable, and the happiness that it can generate is a "frail happiness" (66).

No less frail, however, is Todorov's overall defence of Rousseau's philosophical achievements as a largely consistent system of humanist thought. His novel interpretation may sound convincing at first, thanks to the many relevant passages that he cites. Still, this extensive drawing from Rousseau's entire corpus also undermines some of Todorov's aims. The myriad of contrasting suggestions, remarks, observations, and hypotheses that can be found in Rousseau's immense intellectual production can also suggest a view of his legacy that is less that of a consistent humanist system of thought, and more that of a fluid and often incongruous wandering of the mind among diverse scenarios and convictions. To resolve all internal contradictions and ambiguities by speaking of "sheer intensity of thought" is not sufficient. In fact, by reshuffling the quotations from Rousseau that Todorov collects, one could write a counter-essay. Perhaps, it would be better to say that the comprehensive, humanist "third way" belongs less to Rousseau himself than to a new postmodern entity whom we could baptize "Rousseau-Todorov." It is as such that the "wisdom" of the *Emile* can be rediscovered and used to re-read Rousseau's philosophical corpus. It is as such that the "third way" can be said to underlie the entire body of Rousseau's work. It is as such that a thoroughly humanist view of Rousseau can become plausible and valuable, though not capable of erasing once and for all the plausibility of alternative interpretations. After all, the greatness of Rousseau lies in the diversity of insights that he has been able to generate with his rich and polymorphous intellectual production. One or two scholarly labels, however positive they may sound, are not enough to contain him and his work.

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***Articulated Experiences: Towards a Radical Phenomenology of Contemporary Social Movements***

PEYMAN VAHABZADEH

Albany: SUNY Press, 2003; 223 pages.

Employing all the familiar postmodern terminology, Vahabzadeh's *Articulated Experiences* is a fast-paced exploration of contemporary social theory aimed at establishing an antifoundationalist theory to accommodate "new [social] movements ... [which] generally involve nontotalizing antifoundationalist praxis" (1). Using this theory, Vahabzadeh then seeks to answer the question: "Are we post-modern yet?" (3). The book draws heavily upon Laclau and Mouffe's highly acclaimed *Hegemony and Socialist Strategies* (1985) and Gramsci's *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (1971).

Methodologically, Vahabzadeh is indebted to Heideggerian elements in the work of Reiner Schürmann, whose method of radical phenomenology informs this study.

Vahabzadeh begins by explaining that "[t]he term new social movements emerged to designate a wide range of contemporary movements: ecological and environmentalist movements, feminist and women's movements, AIDS, peace, gay and lesbian, indigenous or aboriginal rights movements..." (9). What is common to these movements is that they are cultural or social rather than political in their focus. Accordingly, the actions they take are set within a social, as opposed to a political, arena and seek societal rather than political/institutional change. Further, and most importantly for Vahabzadeh, "[c]laims to group or individual identity as a particularity in contrast to other groups or the state in fact becomes the pivot around which the new movements are arranged" (10). For this reason Vahabzadeh claims that a theory of new social movements "should understand *identity as a particularity* that does not make claims about some ontological or essential universality of the identity to which all other particularities must conform" (11). Both Touraine and Melucci, according to Vahabzadeh, seek to explain "new social movements in this way. Touraine believes that such identity claims are the byproduct of a shift from an industrial to a postindustrial society. Similarly, Melucci says these identity claims occur as a result of changes in historical circumstance. Eder, on the other hand, explains such identity claims as being a matter of "middle class radicalism." All three approaches Vahabzadeh rejects since, among other reasons, they all imply some sort of "ultimate referentiality" and therefore fail to meet the requirements that he has set out for a properly post-modern, antifoundationalist theory. Vahabzadeh then turns to Laclau and Mouffe's notion of "hegemony." For Laclau and Mouffe "every identity ... is the effect of a 'constitutive outside,' that is an external threat that consolidates the elements within a structure" (43). In other words, identity claims are informed by the predominant ideology and ethos of a given context that constitutes its "constitutive outside," or its "hegemony." To this Vahabzadeh adds a careful analysis of Gramsci's original formulation of the notion of "hegemony" in order to accentuate the role that experience plays in the creation and overturning of hegemonies.

Having laid out this critical groundwork, Vahabzadeh next proceeds with the constructive portion of his task. He argues that identity claims are made (or, rather, acts of identification consist) in the articulation of experiences of possibility. Such possibility is made available by the underdefined aspects of the governing hegemony. That is, no hegemony is such that it contains or otherwise defines all possible sources of meaning within the context it governs. The agent or collective recognizing this, what Vahabzadeh refers to as the "unfixity" of the hegemony, is free to act in a manner that is directed toward the acquisition of meaning and identity out of such possibilities. In this sense it articulates the experiences of these possibilities. It is only after arriving at this formulation that Vahabzadeh is in position to express what is probably the most philosophically significant statement of the book: that "*Acting and being become one*" (94). Vahabzadeh adds to this only one proviso, and in so doing he reveals a thoroughly Heideggerian, and Gadamerian, allegiance. He maintains that "[e]xperience ... takes place within the limits and the possibilities of language" (81). Central to Vahab-

zadeh's argument is the view that language is the most fundamental mediating factor in both articulation and acts of identification.

After he has carried out the theory-construction portion of his work, Vahabzadeh returns to the question: "Are we post-modern yet?" (3). His conclusion is that the regime, or logic, put in place by the governing hegemony does not permit a proper answer to the question, but that through our own critical articulation of possibilities, an era liberated from essential universality, in other words a truly postmodern era, reveals itself to be imminent. Vahabzadeh concludes his book with the prescription that sociology must embrace the method of radical phenomenology that he has put forth as a means of reinventing the discipline as a "sociology of possibilities." This approach, according to Vahabzadeh, will lead the discipline to abandon its pretension to being the "science of modern society" and will open it up to becoming "an instrument for human emancipation" (183). Vahabzadeh's prescription requires a drastically different conceptualization of sociology that, in my opinion, might more accurately be characterized as a philosophy of social history, or even a philosophy of societal future, and not "sociology" at all.

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***Moral Textures: Feminist Narratives in the Public Sphere***

MARIA PIA LARA

Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999; 280 pages.

Maria Pia Lara presents in this book a broad and original interpretation of the success of the feminist movement. Her analysis of the history of the women's movement emphasizes its origins in aesthetic expression, using a variety of sources from aesthetic, social, and narrative theory to weave together a picture of how the private world and language of women evolved into, and in turn caused the evolution of, the public language of politics and social institutions. Lara places her analysis within the empirical framework of feminist history while also making imaginative use of critical theory. While her analysis is, in the end, somewhat preliminary, her argument provides a useful template for further examinations of feminism as well as of other, more nascent, social movements.

Lara's emphasis on the role of the aesthetic in effecting political and social change results in a focus on novelty in her understanding of how change comes about. This underlies her argument that "new ways of conceiving political forms have to be imagined before they can be achieved" (77), and prompts her to focus on the creative dimension of social change. Drawing on Hannah Arendt's conception of the performative nature of narrative in the public sphere (to do this, Lara connects Arendt's conception of storytelling as the foundation of public memory to her analysis of the role of speech in the formation of identity in the *polis*), Lara combines this creative and ultimately unpredictable element of self-disclosure with the pragmatics of Habermas to produce a new way of conceiving illocutionary force. Drawing as well upon the Hegelian conception of recognition, Lara suggests that communication affects both parties involved in the exchange,