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## A Multi-Voiced Book

Fred Evans. *The Multivoiced Body: Society and Communication in the Age of Diversity.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2008. xi + 352 pp.

The first thing that strikes the reader about Fred Evan's book *The Multivoiced Body* is that, as Nelson Goodman might have said, it exemplifies what it expresses. The book develops a theory of society as a "multivoiced body," but in the process of developing this theory, Evans engages with an almost overwhelming array of voices in contemporary philosophy, including—to give just a short list—not just continental philosophers (such as Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard, Deleuze and Guattari, Merleau-Ponty, Agamben, Levinas, Jean-Luc Nancy, Judith Butler, and Adriana Cavaroro), or historical figures (such as Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger), but also cognitive scientists (such as Andy Clark, Paul Churchland, and Daniel Dennett), linguists (such as Bakhtin and Saussure), and philosophers of science (such as Thomas Kuhn, Bruno Latour, and David Bloor). Evans has read all these thinkers carefully, and in the book we not only get precise summaries and discussions of each of the figures but also insightful reflections—both positive and negative—on their relevance for Evans' project. In addition, there are extended—and penetrating—discussions of various works of art and literature, including, most notably, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and a "video opera" (5) called *The Cave*, which is the result of a collaboration between Beryl Korot, a video artist, and the well-known composer Steve Reich.

On top of all this, as Evans himself notes in his Preface, many of his projects, including this one, have been inspired by his teaching and developmental work in Laos, where he worked in the early '70s in an orthopedic clinic that "was filled with civilians and soldiers, children and adults, waiting to receive physiotherapy and prosthetic devices as part of their compensation for being detritus of the struggle for global hegemony between the United States and the Soviet Union" (ix). It was there, he says, that he came face to face with "the prevalence of capitalistic globalization, ethnic cleansing, and other forms of political and social exclusion" and found that his "ingrained ideas of Western technological progress, individuality, and self-reliance were disrupted by the Lao ideas of Buddhist serenity, community, and compassion" (ix–x; cf. 193). "My exposure to these differences," he writes, "produced a novel voice for me, one within which Lao and Western beliefs continued to contest with each other for increased audibility" (x). The idea that we should listen to the voices

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of others is, of course, something we would all agree with, but Evans admits that it took his "extraordinary experience" (x) in other countries to truly bring the point home to him. It made the cliché a reality. Evans says little more about his experiences in Laos apart from this brief description in the Preface, but the lesson of "listening to the voices of others" in Laos is clearly what accounts for what one might call the *affective tonality* produced by reading the book.

Philosophers, I think, are often far too quick to jump to a conceptual reading of books, ignoring their affective tone. Nietzsche says somewhere that there are many philosophical books in which, when you read them, you can literally—literally—feel the hunched shoulders and the pinched stomach of the scholar poring over texts in his cramped study; and while Nietzsche appreciated the work of scholars and what he called "philosophical laborers," these were books he slowly but respectfully closed and quietly put back on the shelf.[1] There is an aphorism in *Twilight of the Idols* where Nietzsche quotes a casual remark by Flaubert, "One can only think and write when seated," and he comments, infuriated, "Now I have caught you, nihilist! Seated flesh [*das sitzfleisch*] is the very sin against the Holy Spirit. Only thoughts reached by walking have value."[2] (Parenthetically, I note that one might be able to write a minor history of literature and even philosophy from the viewpoint of authors' modes of writing. Nietzsche insisted that writers need to be vital, mobile, and upright at the moment of creation, and he always wrote, in his notebooks, while walking vigorously outdoors; Virginia Woolf, Lewis Carroll, Fernando Pessoa, and Ernest Hemingway all wrote while standing; Thomas Wolfe, who was six-and-a-half feet tall, used the top of his refrigerator as his desk, constantly shifting his weight from one foot to the other. At the opposite extreme, there are writers who took Flaubert one step further and wrote while lying down, such as Mark Twain, Marcel Proust, and, perhaps most famously, Truman Capote, who declared himself to be "a completely horizontal writer."[3] The advent of computers and laptops has no doubt altered the horizons of how and where and in what position we can write.) Nietzsche's point, of course, is not that writing positions determine writing styles, but rather that

[1] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufman (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), "Faced with a Scholarly Book," §366, pp. 322–24.

[2] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, Part I, "Maxims and Arrows," Aphorism 34, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufman (New York: Viking Press, 1954), 471.

[3] These examples are taken from a short but fascinating piece by George Pendle called "To Sit, To stand, To Write," May 12, 2009, online at http://therumpus.net/2009/05/to-sit-to-stand-to-write/, accessed December 17, 2010.

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every work, every book has its own physiognomy, which affects us differently than the explicit content of the book, just as the explicit content of what someone is saying is modified by the implicit content of their gestures, their facial expression, their tone, even their posture.

What is remarkable about Evans' book is that the conceptual content and affective tonality of the book largely coincide. Even if he in fact wrote his book seated at his desk at Duquesne University, the affective tone of the books feels as if he were still in the orthopedic clinic in Laos—listening to the voice of compassion he found in his Buddhist friends and patients; watching how Laotian religion "was a continually negotiated partnership between the voices of the traditional spirit cults and the historically more recent Theravada Buddhism" (158); or noting how the concept of development meant something different to his Laotian colleagues than his American counterparts (for the former, development meant grassroots initiatives and Laotian independence; for the later, it meant making the Lao conform to US global political aims) (156). In Evans' book, instead of feeling the hunched shoulders and pinched stomach of Nietzsche's specialist-scholar, one feels as if one is in the open air, an intellectual open air, as if Evans were willing to listen and talk to anyone and everyone, regardless, as we say, of race, creed, color, or religion. On this score, one of the most telling moments in the book, for me, comes at a point where Evans cites a 1996 article from the *New Yorker* magazine, which is a firsthand account by someone named Ingo Hasselbach, who had been a member of a neo-Nazi group. "[Neo-Nazi] groups like the one I was part of," says Hasselbach, "watch their enemies from a distance. They are afraid getting near might defuse their hate, or at least corrupt it with first-hand knowledge and second thoughts. This is what distinguishes a true ideological hate: the way members of the group carry it so carefully, keeping it sealed against all corruption. And this is also why bombs are a perfect weapon for terrorist groups: they allow them to maintain a cleansing distance from the target, and the violence is sudden; there is no time for arguments and counter blows."[4] This is an example of what Evans will come to call an "oracle," that is, "a discourse that elevates itself above the others by presenting itself as universal or absolute" (11). (Evans' use of the term "oracular" in this way is somewhat idiosyncratic, it seems to me, since in ancient Greece, oracles—like the Delphic oracle—far from being absolute in their pronouncements, were enigmatic, riddle-producing, inscrutable, mysterious...). Evans' discourse is the exact opposite

[4] Ingo Hasselbach with Tom Reiss, "How Nazis Are Made," *New Yorker* (January 8, 1996) 55, quoted in Evans, 208–9.

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of this Neo-Nazi discourse: it is open, plural, exploratory; it is generous to its interlocutors, ready to listen and learn, while equally ready to critique and question. This is why I said that the book exemplifies what it expresses: there is a multivoiced reality to this book that can only be experienced by reading it, and by reading it affectively. It is something that a conceptual discussion of a work can never capture. If we are called to *do* something in Evans' book (listen!), it is exemplified by Evans' own writing.

But let me turn now to the conceptual content of the book, rather than to its affective physiognomy. The title of the book—*The Multivoiced Body: Society and Communication in the Age of Diversity*—seems, on the surface at least, to lay out both a problem and its solution. The problem is given in the subtitle—the problem of diversity—and the solution is given in the title—a conception of society as a "multivoiced body." But before I even cracked the book, my first reaction to the title was something like this: Why '*voice*'? Why privilege the concept of voice? The fact that every society is constituted by a plurality of voices (which is a descriptive claim) and that we should *listen* to these diverse voices (which is a normative claim) is, as I've said, something probably all of us would agree with—so much so that it could risk sounding trivial. So that was a question that I approached Evans' book with from the start: What is he going to do with this concept of voice that is, precisely, not trivial? Second, as I read—and then re-read—the book, I had a feeling not dissimilar to watching the movie *The Sixth Sense*, which tells two simultaneous stories at once. You initially think the movie is about a therapist helping a young boy who thinks he sees dead people, only to discover that the therapist is himself one of those dead people, and that the movie is 'really' (or 'also') about the therapist coming to terms with his own death. In Evans' book, you initially think the story is about how the concept of voice will help solve the problem of diversity, only to discover that that there is a deeper problem, or at least a different problem, that Evans is grappling with—except that this twist occurs in the middle of the book, and not at the end. You discover that the book is 'really' (or 'also') about how the concept of voice can solve this second problem. What are these two stories, and why does the concept of the voice lie at their intersection?

## 1. The First Story: The Problem of Diversity

At the end of part one, Evans proposes his theory of society as a *multivoiced body* as his response to a specific problematic he sees in our contemporary situation, which he calls "the dilemma of diversity" and which he analyzes in

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the first part of his book. The problem of diversity, to some degree, has always been one of the fundamental problems of socio-political philosophy, but one that Evans thinks has been exacerbated by current trends toward globalization and multiculturalism. As Amy Guttman puts it, "What kind of communities can justly be created and sustained out of our human diversity?"[5] Evans suggests that political philosophy has traditionally offered two solutions to this dilemma: *either* diverse individuals and groups are expected to submit—either by force or persuasion—to a single idea of the 'good'; *or*, in our modern liberal democracies, they are expected to agree to a set of 'neutral' rules that allow them to pursue their own conceptions of the good without interfering with the differing interests of others (this is Rawls' conception of the priority of the 'right' over the good). Put crudely, the first option is the one that no doubt persisted throughout most of human history: if you went to war and lost, chances are you would either be slaughtered and lose your life or else you would be taken into captivity and turned into a slave or a vassal, deprived of your liberty, and forced to work in the service of someone's else's conception of the good life in order to make *them* happy. (For the ancients, given these two options, it was generally deemed to be heroic to die in battle but shameful to be taken captive.) The modern revolution, by contrast, was to insist—using the Lockean phrase from the Declaration of Independence—that "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" were *rights* that should be guaranteed to all human beings. Losing a war no longer meant that you automatically lost either your life or the freedom to pursue your own happiness, since these rights were deemed to be *inalienable*, that is, they cannot be taken away from a person in *any* circumstance, even war. It was the triumph, as we say, of Right over Might. One only has to think of how recently slavery was a common practice to recognize how revolutionary this idea is, how much it should not be taken for granted.

So what then is the problem with the triumph of Right over Might in the modern world? In the third part of the book, Evans points to a fundamental problem with our modern political paradigm, namely, that 'political liberalism' (at least of the Rawlsian sort) itself implies a particular conception of a communitarian good—and indeed that it is a 'Western' conception of the good society. If this is true, then one could say that "the best relation between it and non-liberal 'peoples' is of the *modus vivendi* sort" (253). (A *modus*

[5] *Multiculturalism: Examining the Roots of Recognition*, ed. Amy Gutmann (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), xiii, quoted in Evans, 3.

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*vivendi* is a way of living or, more specifically, an accommodation between disputing parties to allow life to go on.) If one wants to avoid this conclusion, one could go further and proclaim that political liberalism is "universal and founded on reasons [that are] binding for everyone, whether they realize it or not" (253). This would be close to Habermas' position. But neither of these options is satisfactory to Evans.

Put in slightly different terms, Evans suggests that the dilemma of diversity oscillates between the two poles of homogeneity and heterogeneity: "modernism" tended to embrace universals (universal education, universal suffrage, and so on), whereas "postmodernism" tended to put universals in question by embracing heterogeneity, difference, and pluralism (4). The first corresponds to what a character in one of Salman Rushdie's novels (Saleem, in *Midnight's Children*) calls "the Indian disease," that is, "the desire to encapsulate the whole of reality in a homogeneous system" (248). The second corresponds to the problem of difference: in embracing the diversity of voices, do we also embrace the voices of racism, sexism, patriarchy, homophobia, and so on? I will return to these two questions below.

## 2. The Second Story: The Problem of Agency

The second problem that emerges in the second part of the book is no longer the problem of diversity, but the problem of agency. Put simply, the dilemma here is between subjects and language—the modernist emphasis on *subjects* and the postmodernist emphasis on *discourse* or *language*. As Evans puts it at one point, "Is language or discourse ... a pattern to which subjects and their mental activities conform ... or is language just a malleable tool that subjects use in order to express their thoughts and to communicate with one another?" (116). The analyses in this second part of the book are fascinating, and in my opinion they form the core of the book: dealing with the problem of diversity rests on this more difficult problem of agency, and the concept of the voice lies at the intersection of the two problems.

We already get a hint of this problem in the somewhat unexpected second chapter of the book. The first chapter introduces the primary dilemma of the book—"How to think of social and political unity in an age of diversity" (21)—and the second chapter is entitled, "History of the Dilemma," leading one to expect, perhaps, an analysis of how this dilemma has been worked out in this history of political and social philosophy. But in fact, nothing of the kind happens in the second chapter. Instead, it immediately turns, somewhat

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surprisingly, to a discussion of the concepts of cosmos and chaos, beginning with an analysis of the creation myths found in the Egyptians and in Plato's *Timaeus*, as if *this*—the opposition between cosmos and chaos—is what the dilemma of diversity is really all about. Initially, it seemed to me to be a rather abrupt transition, another *Sixth Sense* moment. But it soon became clear that the introduction of the concepts of cosmos and chaos were really Evans' way of getting to the concept of "chaosmos," which is a term coined by James Joyce but developed by Deleuze and Guattari as a philosophical concept. And indeed, Evans uses the concept of chaosmos to get at a broader assessment of the usefulness of Deleuze and Guattari's work for his project. As he says in the middle of the chapter, "Any philosopher today should consider stating where his or her ideas stand in relation to Deleuze and Guattari's work" (33). And this is exactly what Evans does: the bulk of the chapter contains an incisive analysis of a number of key Deleuzian concepts, not only chaosmos but also reciprocal presupposition, deterritorialization and reterritorialization, the virtual and the actual, abstract machines, becomings, hecceities, and so on. In just a few pages—barely more than twenty—Evans provides an excellent analysis of the main outlines of Deleuze and Guattari's entire work. It is the conclusion of the chapter that is most interesting for Evans' project, since it deals with the problem of agency, or what Evans here calls "the problem of anonymity" (53), which in a sense animates the entire book. Deleuze and Guattari are critical of the subject or ego. Evans cites well known passages where they claim that "humans are made exclusively of inhumanities" (54); that the purpose of schizoanalysis is "that of tirelessly taking apart egos and their presuppositions—to the point that "there seems to be no 'who' left, only the anonymous and impersonal 'flow' of absolute deterritorialization and the 'inhumanities' of which Deleuze and Guattari speak" (55). It is this movement toward an anonymous and impersonal flow that Evans wants to challenge, since it seems "to erase our own contribution to our existence and our society" (55). It is not that Evans denies Deleuze and Guattari's insights, but as he says, he wants to "produce a view of ourselves that captures *both* our anonymous *and* our personal sides at once" (55). This, then, is the role that the concept of the *voice* plays in Evans' book. It is not simply the idea that society is made up of diverse voices and that we should listen to those voices (the first story). More profoundly, the concept of voice is a way of rethinking the notion of agency that *combines* the anonymous and the personal (55) (the second story).

Evans is moving in the opposite direction of the "Speculative Realism" movement in European philosophy, spearheaded by Quentin Meillassoux and including Ray Brassier, Ian Hamilton Grant, and Graham Harmann, who

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want to move away from the subject-centered philosophy that has dominated European philosophy (at least Meillassoux argues) since Kant. Evans does not necessarily want to restore a philosophy of the subject, but he is supremely interested in maintaining a concept of *agency*, at least in the sense that we can be shapers of our own destiny. In this sense, Evans reads to me like a hermeneutic philosopher such as Paul Ricoeur, whose essays usually staked out a *via media*, or middle path, between two contrasting positions. One of the contrasts Evans is trying to avoid is, as he says, "the stark alternative between representing people as subordinated to other structures, for example language or economic systems, or as fully autonomous agents" (161)—in other words, he is trying to stake out a position between existentialism (which emphasized the role of agents and choice—we literally *make* ourselves) and structuralism or even post-structuralism, if we can use these terms, which tended to see subjects as secondary effects that are constituted by primary structures (whether these are language and discourse, or the unconscious, or social structures, and so on). Even within the structuralist field, there is the (somewhat Foucauldian) question of whether we are determined more by discourse or by non-discursive structures.

So we have two stories in Evans' book, two sets of problems: the first is the problem of diversity (how do we find a unity within a diversity of voices that is not merely 'oracular'?), while the second is the problem of agency (how do we recognize that we are *constituted* as subjects without thereby denying the fact that we are agents that contribute to our own constitution?). This is what makes Evans book so fascinating and complex, since the concept of voice lies at the intersection of these two stories, these two sets of problems, and indeed it is his contention that the concept of voice is capable of resolving the two sets of problems. Far from being something trivial, Evans is using the concept of voice to try to solve an incredibly complex set of interrelated problems. So let me turn now to the Evans' concept of voice.

## 3. The Solution: The Concept of Voice

It is at the end of part one that Evans proposes his theory of society as a *multivoiced body* as his response to the dilemma of diversity. "My contention," he writes, "[is] that we are primarily voices or creatures of dialogue and that society is a unity composed of diversity—that it is a multivoiced body" (62). Now seeing society as a kind of body is not new: one frequently speaks of the "social body" or the "body politic." For that matter, seeing society as a collection of

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voices is not new either: we frequently speak of "letting one's voice be heard" or "giving a voice" to an individual or group that has hitherto been deprived of one. So—once again—I was curious to see where Evans was going with the concept of voice; and with regard to the problem of diversity (our first story), his first thesis indeed is a strong one, and a surprising one: his claim is that ***voice*** is "the central constituent of society" (62); or, as he says elsewhere, "that voices are the primary units of society, and that the social body is the interplay among them" (159).

This, to be sure, is hardly a straightforward claim. Why does the concept of voice lie at the basis of Evans' socio-political philosophy? To my knowledge, no one in the history of the universe has ever made such a claim. In making this claim, Evans is clearly distancing himself from other approaches, which would see society based upon the theory of the social contract (Hobbes) or the spirit of the laws (Plato, Montesquieu) or the theory of the State (Plato, the best Republic) or the problem of legitimation (Durkheim, Habermas) and so on. The question we must ask is therefore: Why does Evans base his entire socio-political theory on a theory of voice? Evans here sets himself a formidable task, for he then has to show how the usual features we ascribe to society are reducible to voices (for instance, Evans writes, "I must demonstrate that voices incorporate social structures as part of their corporeality" [159]).

The answer to this seems to lie in the problem of agency (our second story): the notion of voice provides Evans with "a form of agency that is reducible to ***neither*** language ***nor*** subjects" (143) but is rather a kind of "hybrid" between the two. On this score, it is not surprising that Bakhtin plays such a fundamental role in Evans book, since it is Bakhtin that makes an explicit link between the voice and hybridization. Indeed, Evans explicitly presents his theory of the multivoiced body as an "extension" of Bakhtin's linguistics and literary analyses. In his book ***The Dialogic Imagination***, Bakhtin defines hybridization as "a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance" (63), as when novelists exemplify the cost of colonized groups "having to appropriate the voice of the dominant group in order to succeed or even survive" (64). Evans cites passages in which Salman Rushdie mocks Indians who adopt "a hideous mockery of an Oxford drawl" (63–64) into their speech, or where W. E. B. Du Bois presents the "double voicing" of American blacks, incorporating both "Black English" and standardized American English into their utterances (64). Bakhtin's point is "that language 'is unitary only as an abstract grammatical system of normative forms,' that is, only in grammar books or in traditional linguistic theory." But "outside these artificial realms, language is a plethora of intersecting 'social languages' or '"languages" of

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heteroglossia' that represent 'the co-existence of socio-ideological contradiction between the present and the past, between differing epochs of the past, between different sociological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles, and so forth, all given bodily form.' "[6]

In a way, Evans' theory of voices is not dissimilar to Nietzsche theory of the drives. Nietzsche held that each of us contains within ourselves "a vast confusion of contradictory drives" such that we are, as Nietzsche liked to say, ***multiplicities***, and not unities.[7] This is Nietzsche's doctrine of ***perspectivism*** ("there are no facts, only interpretations"): for Nietzsche, it is our ***drives*** that interpret the world, that are perspectival—and not our egos, not our conscious opinions. Nietzsche's point is not that I have a different perspective on the world than you; it is rather that each of us has multiple perspectives on the world within ourselves because of the multiplicity of our drives—drives that are often contradictory among themselves, and in a constant struggle or combat with each other. This is also where Nietzsche first developed his concept of the will to power—at the level of the drives. "Every drive is a kind of lust to rule," he writes, "each one has its perspective that it would like to compel all the other drives to accept as a norm."[8] What we call our "ego" or "self" is simply our dominant or sovereign drive, which experiences the other drives as something else operating within us—what Freud came to call the *id*. In a sense—and in a sense only—Evans translates Nietzsche's theory of the multiple and competing drives into a theory of multiple and competing voices. This point can be made clear through the following citations, taken almost randomly from the book: "Voices are never pure; they are always dynamically hybrid, a clamor of all in all" (76). "Every utterance is actually—[whether] intentionally or organically—a cacophony of voices" (67). "Each of these voices, and hence society itself, is a dialogic hybrid: each voice is shot through with the rest, each contesting for audibility with the others that have helped to constitute it" (58). "Each person as well as society is a dialogic hybrid or multivoiced body" (75). "Society is a contestation for audibility among the voices that participate in that body" (168). "Each enunciator may be characterized by its most audible voice, its 'dominant' or 'lead' voice, but that voice is inseparable from the others that resound within it" (249).

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[6] Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 291, quoted in Evans, 62.

[7] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Random House, 1967), §259, p. 149.

[8] Ibid., §481, p. 267.

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What is the advantage of Evans theory of the voice over Nietzsche's theory of the drives? One advantage, it would seem, is that it avoids the charges of 'naturalism' or 'determinism' that might be leveled against Nietzsche, that is, the idea that we are naturally—or rather anonymously—determined by our drives. Replacing 'drives' with 'voices' allows Evans to restore the sense of agency that he is seeking. "The notion of voice," he writes, "overcomes the problem of anonymity" (83). In other words, the concept of voice is a mediating concept that allows him to show that subjects are not autonomous agents in charge of their own destiny, but neither are they the mere effects of forces that lie outside their control. The concept of voice allows Evans to "capture the relation between the anonymous and personal dimensions of our existence" (155). At best, we have an "elliptical identity" (145) that oscillates between these two poles of the anonymous and the persona. As Evans writes, "Any social structure is an interweaving of linguistic and nonlinguistic practices" (162). "Discourse and non linguistic equipment and practices presuppose and can interrupt one another" (165). The concept of voice captures this reciprocal determination: "A voice involves a linguistic or 'expressive' dimension (reflexive language) and a content dimension (the nonlinguistic modes of our bodies and of their [prosthetic] extensions, that is, the technologies, systems, structures that surround us)" (165–66). "This elliptical form of identity captures the sense we have of ourselves as both the center of our existence and as outside ourselves; as both personal and anonymous beings at once" (166).

I have to say that I am persuaded by Evans theory of voice and by the way in which he uses it to resolve the two problems that animate his book: diversity and agency. My summary here hardly does justice to the complexity and persuasiveness of Evans' analyses. Nonetheless, there were a few hesitant thoughts that came to me as I was reading, although these are not so much critiques as they are reflections on Evans remarkable analyses.

First, given his indebtedness to Deleuze, I found it curious that Evans did not make use of the concept of voice that Deleuze develops in *Logic of Sense*, since it seems similar to his own. At one point, Evans suggests that Deleuze proposes a concept of voice that he equates with Being and event but does not go on to exploit to its fullest (56). But in *Logic of Sense*, Deleuze identifies the problem of language as the question of how sounds are separated from bodies and organized into propositions, that is, how the audible content of bodies (our bodily noises—that is, our grunts, squeals, burps, rumblings, and so on) are freed for the expressive function. For example, I may speak at a conference, uttering propositions, reading a paper in a language I did not invent; but at

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any moment I could fall back into the noises of my body, and simply start shrieking or howling in front of my audience. In other words, my voice could lose its expressive or linguistic function and fall back into a mere bodily noise. This is what Deleuze calls the "dynamic genesis" of language, which—like Evans theory—straddles the personal and impersonal dimensions of the voice. Moreover, the idea of the "logic of sense" that Deleuze analyzes in his book seems to be lacking in Evans theory. The Greeks called non-Greeks "barbarians" (*barbaros*) because when they heard foreigners speak, all they heard were nonsensical syllables ("bar bar"). They heard the Voice, and they could see that it "made sense," that it *had* a sense, but they themselves lacked access to the sense of the foreign language. The concept of voice may allow Evans to mediate between the anonymous and personal dimensions of our existence and experience, but Deleuze seems to be suggesting that we also need a concept of sense to account for the way in which we mediate between voices themselves.

Second, there is, oddly, little analysis of *noise* in Evans' book, which has been analyzed insightfully in Michel Serres' writings (the notion appears briefly on p. 71). What happens when the cacophony of voices becomes reduced to mere noise or static? Similarly, the notion of schizophrenia only appears in passing in the book (206), where he cites Eugene Minkowski's report of the experience of one of his schizophrenic patients who heard voices: "In the street, a kind of murmer *completely envelops him*... and when the voices are particularly frequent and numerous, the atmosphere *round him* is saturated with a kind of fire, and produces a sort of oppression inside the heart and lungs and something of a mist round his head" (206). What is one to make of *these* kinds of voices, which appear in the head of schizophrenics? At one point, Evans notes that "the notion of voices may be able to make contributions to clinical phenomena such as 'split personality,' 'hearing voices,' and 'repression' at the level of the individual," but he does not pursue this insight. Elsewhere, in his discussion of Lacan and what he calls "the social unconscious" (the title of chapter eight, which would deserve a fuller discussion), Evans notes that "a pure slide from signifier to signifier, a constant slippage of the signified under the signifier without any stops, would be akin to psychosis" (216). This of course, is the direction that Deleuze pushes his socio-political analyses in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*: capitalism is literally schizophrenic through and through. Evans admits that the myth of the Tower of Babel illustrates "the anxiety of being overwhelmed by the voices resounding in our own" (207), that is, by schizophrenia; and he admits that "the intensification of this anxiety inclines a society to repress its identity as a multivoiced body" (207), that is, it leads to repression in the form of the oracle. But this is the whole question that

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Deleuze poses with regard to schizophrenia: is it merely a negative phenomenon that is repressed, or is there a positivity to schizophrenia as a process? Does the "interplay of equally audible voices"—to use one of Evans' crucial phrases, which summarizes his principle of justice—include the audibility of schizophrenic voices? Evans seems to hint that this is the case, when he insists on "the creation of new voices" as the condition for "the metamorphosis of society, the vehicle of novelty and heterogeneity" (192), but the conditions under which genuinely new voices are created is not entirely made clear in the book (and it is a different question than the question of listening to or incorporating 'other' voices; see, for example, 193).

Third, Evans at times conflates the concept of voice with the concept of *dynamic hybrids*. For instance, after criticizing Marx for being too "mechanistic" in his thinking (as Marx says, "It is not the consciousness of men that defines their being but on the contrary their social being that determines their consciousness" [160]), Evans attempts to show, in Deleuze and Guattari's terminology, that there is a "reciprocal determination" between social practices and consciousness (161–62). The following section attempts something similar with regard to the relation between discourse and non-discursive practices (162), using an interesting distinction made by Shoshana Zuboff, in "computerized workplaces," between *automating* and *informating* (164–67). One can see how Evans' 'mediated' position between these various extremes appeals to the concept of hybridity, which of course has been emphasized by thinkers such as Homi Bhabha (28); it is less clear (to me) how the concept of hybridity requires a concept of voice. In other words, at times it was unclear to me—despite Evans' stated intention—if hybridity was the more general concept in the book and if the domain of voice was simply one arena where hybridity manifests itself.

Fourth—and this is a large question that occupies the entire third part of the book—in chapter ten Evans formulates a principle of justice for the multivoiced body (167), which he summarizes in the following phrase: "the interplay of equally audible voices." The question one would like to ask is: What does this add to traditional theory, that is, what does the principle of equality gain when it is turned into the principle of equally audible voices? To get at this question, I would like to conclude by turning to the two problems that Evans himself poses as the crucial questions that confront his theory of society as a multivoiced body, and which he discusses and tries to resolve in the final chapter of the book.

The first problem is this: "How... can we escape the retort that the multivoiced body view of society is itself an oracle?" (88). "How can the view of

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society as a multivoiced body avoid being accused of what Rushdie... labeled the Indian disease, that is, the desire to encapsulate the whole of reality in a homogeneous system" (248). This is the criticism that Evans leveled against Rawl's political liberalism, and his response is that the multivoiced body can never be totalizing precisely because it encourages the constant production of *new* voices that can never be subsumed into a whole. "Unlike traditional views of justice and their emphasis on 'freedom from' coercion," he writes, "the multivoiced body endorses 'freedom for' greater audibility, that is, the empowerment of voices and the encouragement rather than mere tolerance of dissent" (257). This is a persuasive retort to the problem of "oracularity," although Evans does not entirely spell out the conditions under which such genuinely new voices are produced.

The second problem seems to be more intractable: How can we "exclude the excluders" (88), that is, how can Evans' theory of the multivoiced body justifiably exclude certain voices, namely, the voices of "racism, sexism, and other exclusionary doctrines" (88). This is a tough issue. Jacques Derrida, in his book *Rogues*, has a brief discussion of the elections in Algeria in 1992.[9] The elections were projected to give power to a majority that wanted to change the constitution and undermine the process of democratization in Algeria. To avoid this result, the State and the leading party decided to suspend the elections. In the name of saving democracy, they decided to suspend democracy, abolishing the very principle of what they were claiming to protect. This is what Derrida calls the "autoimmunity" of democracy. As Martin Häaglund nicely points out, this is a paradox (or aporia) that lies at the heart of democracy: "The principles that protect democracy may protect those who attack the principles of democracy. Inversely, the attack on the principles of democracy may be a way of protecting the principles of democracy."[10] Evans attempts to respond to criticisms like those of Derrida by suggesting that it is possible and justifiable to limit the *political* power and status of "nihilistic voices" (270) within a society that nonetheless valorizes hearing all its interlocutors" (270). As he writes, "it is legitimate to exclude them from power if they systematically undermine the multivoiced body and its principle of justice" (269). It is not clear to me, however, that "this explanation renders 'excluding the excluders' non-paradoxical" (269), or if Derrida's aporia remains the worm in the

[9] Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, trans. P.-A. Brault and M. Naas (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 33.

[10] See Martin Hägglund, *Radical Atheism: Derrida and the Time of* Life (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), 13.

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fruit of any theory of democracy—including Evans' multivoiced theory of democracy.

Yet the fact that these issues arise while reading the book is hardly a critique of Evans' theory of the multivoiced body but rather, perhaps, its final confirmation, since these are nothing other than *new voices* that are produced through one's own reading of the text. It is in this sense that one could perhaps agree with Leonard Lawlor's claim, in his blurb for the book, that "*The Multivoiced Body* is perhaps the first genuine work of philosophy in the twenty-first century."

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