Chapter 1

Superman

The best way to understand postmodernism is by comparing it to modernism. Post structuralism or Postmodernism when accentuated with the philosophy of law has given rise to terms like "postmodern jurisprudence", "postmodern legal feminism", "postmodern legal theory" and so on.

Reason

The Enlightenment modernism of Descartes and Kant saw reason as a universal

faculty held by all humans which could be used to articulate a set of rational, true beliefs. The goal, then, was to separate reason from contingent and distorting features, such as tradition and emotion.

Kant: Reason proceeds by "eternal" and "unalterable" laws.

Descartes: "I observe that there is in me a certain faculty of judgment that I undoubtedly received from God, as is the case with all the other things that are in me. Since he has not wished to deceive me, he certainly has not given me a faculty such that, when I use it properly, I could ever make a mistake. "

Locke: "reason teaches all mankind that will but consult it that, being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions; for men being all the workmanship of one omnipotent and infinitely wise Maker. "

The postmodern reaction to this line of thought is to argue that reason is not a uniform faculty in all humankind, but is socially constructed; it is always situated within existing practices and discourses, and it will therefore be biased or slanted in favor of existing relations.

Foucault: "The central issue in philosophy and critical thought since the eighteenth century has always been, still is, and will, I hope, remain the question: What is this Reason that we use? What are its limits and what are its dangers?" ³⁶

Horkheimer/Adorno: "the Enlightenment has always aimed at liberating men from fear and establishing their sovereignty. Y et the fully enlightened earth radiates disaster triumphant ...[M]ankind, instead of entering into a truly human condition, is sinking into a new kind of barbarism. ``₃₇

Lyotard: "There is no politics of reason, neither in the sense of a totalizing reason nor in that of the concept. And so we must do with a politics of opinion. "38

Rorty: "Kant splits us into two parts, one called "reason," which is identical in us all, and another (empirical sensation and desire), which is a matter of blind, contingent, idiosyncratic impressions. [But we should] take seriously the possibility that there is no central faculty, no central self, called 'reason'..."³⁹

Given this incredulity toward reason, we can expect that postmodernism will reject any approach in politics and law that claims to be based upon the demands of reason, as if reason were a neutral court of appeal.

Self

The modem view of the self reached an apex in Kant's notion that each individual must be treated as a unique end-in-himself, inviolable and sacrosanct, never to be used

as a mere means. Like other modern thinkers, Kant thought that we might be able to separate the metaphysical, transcendent self from the contingent self, such that the core self can be thought to exist separately from its immersion in a particular culture, language, or history. This attitude has its roots in Cartesian dualism, where the mind was conceived as a separate substance from the body.

Descartes: "because I have a clear and distinct idea of myself--insofar as I am a thing that thinks and not an extended thing--and because I have a distinct idea of a body--insofar as it is merely an extended thing, and not a thing that thinks--it is therefore certain that I am truly distinct from my body, and that I can exist without it. 1140

Kant: "Rational nature exists as an end-in-itself. "41

Rawls: "the self is prior to the ends which are affirmed by it. "42

The postmodern reaction to this line of thinking rests on the notion that the "self" is a product of language and discourse, that the self is "decentered" (to use a term from Althusser); that there is no core self. The postmodernists seem to concur with Claude Levi-Strauss' assertion that the Cartesian ego is the "spoiled brat of philosophy.

Rorty: "The crucial move [] is to think of the moral self, the embodiment of rationality, not as one of Rawls' original choosers [] but as a network of beliefs, desires, and emotions with nothing behind it---no substrate behind the attributes. "44

Althusser: "Since Marx, we have known that the human subject, the economic, political or philosophical ego is not the center of history--and even, in opposition to the Philosophers of the Enlightenment and Hegel, that history has no center []. In tum, Freud has discovered that the real subject, the individual in his unique essence, has not the form of an ego--- that the human subject is de-centered, constituted by a structure which has no center either... "45

Foucault: "As the archaeology of our thought easily shows, man is an invention of recent date. And perhaps one nearing its end. "46

Given this view of the self (which is sometimes associated with the so-called 'death of the subject' and the 'death of the author'), we can expect postmodernism to reject any approach which is based on the assertion that human beings have an immutable nature which pre-exists civil society. The postmodern approach would rule out a social contract theory based upon a 'state of nature,' or for that matter any theory which holds that man is naturally egotistical (Adam Smith) or aggressive (Thomas Hobbes).

Truth

The so-called "rationalists" of the modem epoch (Descartes, Leibniz, Spinoza) thought that philosophy could find a method for establishing first principles of metaphysics and epistemology. In contrast to the rationalists, the so-called "empiricists"

(Hume, Locke) thought that experience could provide a solid basis for truth claims. The

goal in either case was to find the ultimate nature of reality, to make the real into something rational. The idea of truth as correspondence between language and reality exerted a strong influence far beyond the modem period, holding sway even among 20th Century philosophers such as Betrand Russell. These thinkers would have soundly rejected the postmodern contention that truth is constructed, changing, and affected by the distorting influences of class, race, and gender.

Descartes: "There is a need for a method for finding out the truth. []By method I mean certain and simple rules, such that if a man observes them accurately, he shall never assume what is false to be true, but will always gradually increase his knowledge and arrive at a true understanding of all that does not exceed his powers. "47

Russell: "Thus a belief is true when it corresponds to a certain associated complex, and false when it does not. [] What makes a belief true is a fact, and this fact does not (except in exceptional cases) in any way involve the mind of the person who has the belief. "48

In contrast, the postmodemists are skeptical about the notion of a fixed Truth (with a capital T). For example, Nietzsche ridicules the notion of Truth and holds instead that the we are faced with alternative interpretations and perspectives; Rorty thinks that the modem focus on Truth has turned up nothing; and Derrida thinks that what is typically called 'truth' can never find a stable resting place.

Nietzsche: "There is something about "truth," about the search for truth; and when a human being is too human about it--"he seeks the true only o do the good"--I bet he finds nothing."⁴⁹

Rorty: "truth is not the sort of thing that one should expect to have a philosophically interesting theory about...[I] would simply like to change the subject." *so*

Derrida: "what is put into question is precisely the quest for a rightful beginning, an absolute point of departure, a principle responsibility ... [T]he signified concept is never present in and of itself. [] Essentially and lawfully, every concept is inscribed in a chain or in a system within which it refers to the other, to other concepts, by means of a systematic play of differences. "51

Foucault: "'Truth' is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it. A 'regime' of truth. "52

Given this skepticism, it is easy to see why 'Truth' (as commonly understood) does not playacentralroleinpostmodernlegalphilosophy. This is not to say that postmodernists disregard questions of truth and falsity, but they pmport to be sensitive to the ways in which truth is relative to, or shaped by, power relations.

God/Nature/Self-Evidence

The modernists (and their progeny) tended to argue that God had endowed men

with inherent rights which could be deduced by the exercise of reason. These rights were innate and self-evident, and they stood as an ideal or standard to which the law ld aspire.

Jefferson: "We hold these truths be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness. "53

Martin Luther King, Jr: "A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law." ⁵⁴

In contrast, postmodernists profess a disbelief in God, and they reject the notion of self- evident principles of justice and natural law.

Nietzsche: "There are still harmless self-observers who believe that there are 'immediate certainties'; But that 'immediate certainty,' as well as 'absolute knowledge' and the 'thing in itself,' involve a contradiction in terms, I shall repeat a hundred times; we really out to free ourselves from

the seduction of words. "55

Given this suspicion toward self-evident truths (and toward such cherished notions as justice and consensus), postmodern thinkers do not put much stock in common sense or "self-evident" rules, and they are suspicious about the outcomes reached by consensus and popular sovereignty. There is also a commonly held belief, which can be traced to e Marxist Antonio Gramsci, that "common sense" and "reasonableness" are determined

by existing power relations and thus inevitably reflect biases of class and gender.

Writers/Texts/Meaning

The thinkers of the modern period tended to assume that the meaning of a text could be reduced to the intention of the author. Texts were interpreted literally and meaning was limited to the four corners of the text. For example, courts sitting in the modern era stressed the literal meaning of a contract as controlling, to the exclusion of

contextual factors surrounding the execution of the contract. This view continues to exert a particularly strong hold over conservative thinkers and literary critics of the present age.

Judge Iredall (1798): 'Judges deciding constitutional issues should confine themselves to enforcing norms that are stated or clearly implied in the written Constitution.'58

Edwin Meese: "History and tradition point to an understanding of the Constitution as a document of fixed meaning, supplied by those who framed and ratified it. "59

E.D. Hirsch: "Meaning is that which is represented by a text; it is what the author meant by his use of a particular sign sequence; it is what the s represent." 60

For the postmodernists, the text is a locus of polysemy, dissemination, and multiple meanings. There is no single meaning of the text, and there is an element of undecidability in the inevitable choice which must be made between different readings of a text. Most importantly, the whole notion of the "author" as a locus of meaning is an ideological distortion designed to limit the free play of meaning by achoring interpretations to a seemingly rigid center of reference.

Barthes: "We know that a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God) but a multi- dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. [] Once the Author is removed, the claim to decipher a

```
text becomes quite futile. "61
```

Foucault: "the author is not an indefinite source of significations which fill a work; the author does not precede the works...The author is therefore the ideological figure by which one marks the manner in which we fear the proliferation of meaning. "62

Derrida: "the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences. The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely. "63

Given this, postmodernism will be skeptical of the idea that a single text (say, the Constitution) is 'foundational,' and they will be skeptical of 'authoritative' readings of foundational texts. Further, they will argue that interpretations of these key texts are always offered from a particular perspective, toward a particular end, such that there is no clear 'plain meaning' of a text.

History/Progress

Modern theorists tended to believe in the ideal of moral progress, the

Enlightenment-based belief that, as history unfolds, reason is lifting us out of superstition and moving us toward an increasingly rational political order. Thinkers like Kant and Locke felt that the rise of reason and science in the Enlightenment provided our best hope for the creation of a just society. Later thinkers of the modern era, such as Hegel and Marx, thought that history itself had a internal logic and was moving toward a teleological end-point of a better society.

Hegel: "The history of the world is none other than the progress of the consciousness of freedom. $"_{\rm 64}$

Marx: "Asiatic, ancient, feudal, and modern bourgeois modes of production can be designated as progressive epochs in the economic formation of society. The bourgeois relations of production

are the last antagonistic form of the social process of production [and] create the material condition for the solution of that antagonism. This social formation brings, therefore, the prehistory o f human society to a close. "65

Fukuyama: Liberal democracy is "the endpoint of mankind's ideological evolution" and "cannot be improved upon as an idea"; thus, "no further rical change is possible. "66

The postmodern thinkers argue in response that history has no necessary internal logic or laws, and that claims to moral progress are unfounded.

Nietzsche: "Mankind does not represent a development toward a better, stronger, or higher type, in the sense which this is supposed to occur today. 'Progress' is merely a modern idea--that is to say, a false idea. "67

Lyotard: "Auschwitz refutes speculative [Hegelian] doctrine. This crime at least, which is real, is not rational. "68

Foucault: "Humanity does not gradually progress from combat to combat until it arrives at universal reciprocity, where the rule of law finally replaces warfare; humanity instills each of its violences in a system of rules and thus proceeds from domination to domination. "69

From the foregoing we can see how postmodernism tries to shake free of the metaphysical and epistemic foundations which lie at the roots of the modern approach to ethics, politics, and law. But at the same time, the postmodernists understand that these foundational terms (selfhood, justice, truth) are in some sense inescapable, because in order to talk intelligently about matters of law and justice, we must have recourse to notions of the self, truth, reason, and so on. After all, political and legal theory is centrally concerned with people, so it must treat people as legal subjects with some degree of freedom and autonomy, and it must make claims which putport to be true, so it will end up using the same type of language (terms such as truth, self, rights, freedom, justice) which it found so problematic in the modern thinkers. Yet it uses these terms in a wry, almost sarcastic way. Rorty sometimes labels this approach as an "ironic" posture because it requires the adoption of a language game (broadly construed) which the ironist acknowledges to be contingent and fallible. That is, the ironist uses a certain set of terms to explain her ethical position (that is, she speaks about "rights" and "inherent human dignity") while refusing to give these terms the status of a "final vocabulary" that is closer to reality than the vocabularies used by others, and she is willing to change her vocabulary if a more useful one arises.70 This explains the tendency of postmodernists to pepper their work with quotation marks, which are supposed to designate that certain terms are used tentatively or with reservation.

Chapter 2

The next several sections of this essay comprise a presentation of a sestet of theses pertaining to the state, history, alterity, power, subjectivity and consumerism. It is submitted that these six theses are germane to the comprehension of RJ as a postmodern critique of the modern sensibilities founding the criminal justice system. In other words, they have been chosen because they appear to be most apposite for mapping the intersections between RJ and postmodernism and for facilitating analytical admission to the relationship between the two.

The analysis of each of the designated theses will traverse two stages: firstly, an exposition will be offered of the basic postmodern viewpoint on the issue in question, in contrast to the modern viewpoint; secondly, an enquiry will be undertaken into the extent to which RJ shares the postmodern position.¹⁸ However, it must be urged that the discussion which follows cannot and does not purport to be comprehensive. Certainly, it is not presented as any finished description of RJ, and even less as any catholic elaboration of the constitution of postmodernism. The aim is much more pedestrian, namely, to provide a prolegomenon to the analysis of RJ as postmodern justice.

Postmodernism posits the decline of the nation-state in the era of globalisation. The argument is that postmodernity is the epoch of the global market, peopled by autonomous subjects, with little or no room for the strong state of modernity. The point is underscored by Edgeworth's characterisation of the postmodern state as a contracting state.¹⁹ This characterisation has a dual

import. On the one hand, it refers to the retreat of the state as a public institution and the diminution of its traditional hegemonic role in structuring the lives of its citizens. On the other hand, it signifies the increasing privatisation of public functions, as the law of contract is relied upon more and more in respect of both the provision of (whatever remains of) state services and the internal functioning of state departments. Essentially, the postmodern state has reversed the modern trend to centralisation and corporatism. It is a state for which, according to Edgeworth, ,privatisation, deregulation andmarketisation are the preferred mechanisms by which governance is secured^{*}.20

The welfare state was the pinnacle of the evolution of the modern state. It was centralisation and regulation epitomised, and, from the postmodern perspective, was the left liberal political metanarrative materialised. The postmodern state is defined by the neoliberal disavowal of the perceived welfarist errantry of left liberalism. The watchwords of neoliberalism are the self-same trilogy identified by Edgeworth as the preferred mechanisms of postmodern governance.²¹ In other words, postmodernism champions the neoliberal drive towards the attenuation of all the welfare functions of the modern state. Postmodernism prefers the invisible hand of the free market to the visible hand of the centralised state. Ideally, the postmodern state is an absentee

state or, at best, a minimalist one, divested of many of its traditional functions, which become privatised in the hands of capitalist corporations.²²

The vision of the state held by postmodernism coincides with its rejection of the notion of the grand narrative which it considers to be the defining flaw of modernism. In this connection, the modern nation-state is perhaps the grandest of all narratives. It is a cohesive, centralised and authoritative institution, which is uniquely competent to implement and realise its own truth claims. It is omnipotent and, for as long as it enjoys a monopoly of force, is impervious to

the claims of competitors within its national borders. Postmodernism entails the break-up of the modern notion of state supremacy. State power becomes fragmented and localised, and state authority, like everything else in the postmodern world, becomes negotiable. The status of the state, as narrative, is reduced from the grand to the quotidian. In the postmodern perspective, most, if not all, traditional state functions can be performed as well, if not better, by non-state actors.

RJ shares this postmodern vision of a minimalist or absentee state. Indeed, easily the most conspicuous property of comprehensive RJ is its militant anti- statism. Its project to replace criminal justice with RJ is simultaneously a bid to eject the state from all matters criminal. In its search for a solution to the crime problem, RJ considers the state to be a hindrance which must be removed. The proponents of comprehensive RJ are, in this regard, all decidedly postmodern in their pursuit of a fully privatised system of criminal justice. The same is true, mutatis mutandis, of partial RJ. Although its proponents have reconciled themselves to the continued supremacy of state criminal justice, they too advocate the withdrawal of the state from those areas of the criminal justice system into which RJ may be admitted. Both versions of RJ thus embrace the postmodern argument for a minimalist or absentee state. Both believe that non- state actors are capable of solving, in whole or in part, the problem of criminality upon which the efforts of state agencies hitherto appear to have made little impact.

The intersection between postmodernism and RJ on the question of the state is extensive. Essentially, they are at one in their critique of the modern state in that both want an end of the state as the decisive authority and as the political metanarrative. The anti-statism of RJ mirrors the postmodern assault upon the intrusive character of the modern state. Both the postmodernist and the adherent of RJ advocate privatised relations to replace the current state forms. The RJ critique of the state thus is infused thoroughly with the ethos of postmodernism.

4.2 The History Thesis

Postmodernists readily trawl the past for both inspiration and ammunition in their battle against the configurations of modernism. In the result, historical references bulk large in the postmodern

rejection of the perceived tyranny of the metanarrative. While such references are most evident in postmodern architecture and art, they form an integral facet of the postmodern project in most disciplines.²³ Indeed, it has been argued that postmodernism has embraced a ,return to history' and appreciates the ontological value of historical consciousness.²⁴

Postmodern historicism is concerned primarily with excavating premodern social artefacts and organisational forms which may be enlisted in the crusade against the supposedly totalising machinations of modernism.²⁵ Postmodernists, following Lyotard, generally comprehend the premodern epoch in narrative terms, as opposed to the modern metanarrative.²⁶ The narrative model of knowledge accepts no fixed origin which structures the narrative, and refuses to grant the narrator autonomy from the narrative. It is a model which presumes narrator heteronomy and which values epistemological contingency.²⁷

The postmodern commitment to the narrative tradition translates into a fascination with tribalism and localism as historical constructs. It is, more or less, already a postmodern conventional wisdom to endorse the narrative devices of tribal societies which survive on the fringes of the contemporary capitalist world in Latin America, Africa and Asia. These societies are prehistoric in organisation and technics, and supposedly are free of the metanarrative immoderations of the modern epoch.²⁸ This is why, for example, arguments for a postmodern re-organisation of society invariably rely heavily upon notions of independent crafts, cottage industries, parochial economies and yeoman democracy.²⁹ The idea is to exorcise the demons of modernism and rejuvenate the perceived idyll of premodern community.³⁰

Proponents of RJ share the postmodern predilection for premodern historical justifications. Indeed, RJ is perhaps more strident than postmodernism in its reliance upon history to advance its cause. The opposition between RJ and retributive justice has become firmly established as a RJ article of faith. Retribution is portrayed as a modern response to crime which has no or little foundation in the history of punishment. Adherents of RJ believe that the premodern world was, as regards penal sanctions, a world of RJ. Thus, Christie relies heavily upon the justice regime of premodern African tribes as the basis for his proprietary theory of RJ.³¹ Similarly, the republican theory of RJ espoused by Braithwaite & Pettit is rooted historically in the premodern Roman notions of libertas, civitas and dominium.³² Other RJ advocates such as Zehr and Consedine concur with the view that the premodern era was, more or less, a golden era of restoration in the history of criminal justice.³³

Supporters of RJ identify retribution with large-scale industrial society. In other words, they conceive of it as the penal regime of the modern capitalist world. But they are adamant that retributive justice is neither the natural nor the necessary response to the problem of criminality. For them, RJ is not only the aboriginal but also the more natural way of doing justice. It was the justice of preindustrial, tribal, small-scale societies and, as such, was the archetypal premodern

form of justice. And it was successful in keeping the premodern world free of the kind of rampant criminality in which every modern society has been languishing for decades. As the paradigmatic modern approach to punishment, retribution allegedly has brought about its own demise by its signal failure to make any significant impact upon the contemporary crisis of criminality. Hence the argument for its replacement by RJ which, it is contended, has become necessary because it alone possesses the radical vision required to resolve the crisis.

If retribution is the apogee of the modern way of doing justice, then there can be little doubt that RJ is the prototypical postmodern approach to justice. It defines itself in terms of its opposition to retribution and considers itself to be imbued with the palliative and regenerative powers of its premodern pedigree.³⁴ From the postmodern perspective, retributive justice is a version of the modern metanarrative whereas RJ is imbued with the spirit of the premodern narrative. And the key to overcoming the tyranny of the former is to revert to the freedom of the latter. RJ and postmodernism evidently are coeval in their partiality to the supposedly emancipatory promise of the premodern narrative.

4.3 The Alterity Thesis

Postmodernism has a preoccupation with alterity. It is a preoccupation which has resulted in the idea of the Other becoming acknowledged generally as being ,crucial to any discussion of postmodernism'.³⁵ Such a focus upon alterity is concerned to engage and thereby to foreground the traditional outgroups which have been marginalised by the modern metanarrative. Women, people of colour, homosexuals, indigenous populations, the disabled and the aged: these are the Others, ostracised and silenced by modernism, with whom postmodernism has chosen to identify. A large part of the postmodern project is devoted to embracing and championing the claims of the outsider. It is about giving a voice to the narrative of every outgroup which hitherto has been reduced to ,a sideshow in the grand narrative of world history' by thedomination intrinsic in totalisation.³⁶ The postmodern ideal is a world free of the modern bias against the Other, in which there is no longer any ontological difference between insider and outsider, and in which otherness has ceased to be a concept of marginality.

The postmodern credo is one of perfect equality, in terms of which every perspective is accorded absolute validity. There is no room for either hierarchy or domination in the postmodern worldview. If the postmodern ideal comes to pass, we shall find ourselves, to mangle Marx, in a very Eden of the innate equality of narratives.³⁷ Postmodernism is, in this connection, the self-appointed saviour of the Other. If postmodernism is an emancipatory movement, then outsider emancipation is at the top of its agenda. There is nothing more quintessentially postmodern than the endeavour to find and legitimate the outgroup narrative. Therein, for many postmodernists, lies the true meaning of their project.³⁸

Postmodern jurisprudence, unsurprisingly, is populated heavily by schools of outsider jurisprudence. The engagement between postmodernism and the law is dominated by the jurisprudence of the traditional outgroups identified above.³⁹ Such outsider jurisprudents typically present an alternative truth to that installed as modern law. They seek to secure for their constituencies the same substantive legal subjectivity which modernism had reserved for ablebodied white heterosexual men.⁴⁰ The jurisprudence of alterity desires to integrate outgroups into the concept of legal subjectivity, and thereby to construct a properly universal and neutral subject. It is, ultimately, about validating otherness by subverting the axiom of sameness which lies at the heart of the modern legal form.

RJ may be understood as the outsider jurisprudence of the criminal justice system. Like postmodernism in general and postmodern jurisprudence in particular, it too is dedicated in a fundamental sense to the cause of the Other in the criminal justice system. The traditional outsider of criminal justice is, of course, the victim. Victimologists preceded the proponents of RJ in their advocacy of victims' rights and their overall concern with improving the status of the victim in the criminal justice system. However, RJ has taken a far more radical approach and installed the victim at the epicentre of the restorative process.⁴¹ The victim is no longer someone who must be taken into account by those who manage the disposition of criminal conflicts. She is no longer someone to or for whom justice must be done. In the RJ programme, the victim is an agent of justice. She is transformed from outsider to insider and becomes an indispensable participant in the restorative process. Her otherness, originally a source of powerlessness, is transfigured into a source of power. Shebecomes a ,stakeholder'. RJ vindicates the narrative of the victim in the face of the metanarrative of the criminal justice system.

The community is the other Other of the criminal justice system. It may be true that courts usually are enjoined to take into account the interests of the community when sanctioning a criminal offender. However, the determination of the interests of the community is seldom, if ever, made by the community

Chapter 3