Critical Theory of the Subject in the 20th Century

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Research Project:

Critical Theory of the Subject
in the 20th Century

Project Overviews

1 Summary

The attempts to bid a deconstructive farewell to the Occidental subject and its history have lost their short-lived position of discursive sovereignty in the Humanities. Nonetheless, the modern subject theory of the future will owe many valuable insights it has gained to its harshest critics. There can no longer be a return to bourgeois idealism's naive ideological conceptions of the subject. Even a simple stock-taking of subjectivity's historical forms of expression can lead us no further, so long as no theoretical safe haven can be found in modern times or, more concretely, in the 20th century. Any future theory of the subject will have to be a critical theory that eliminates the metaphysical questions surrounding it through self-analysis and that, through Consciousness Theory, adopts a new posture towards forms of abstract real-world subjectivity. The concept of criticism, as the dominant methodological aspect of any future theory of the subject, will have to be able to shift between its Kantian and Horkheimerian formulations.

It is by no means a coincidence that the Critical Theory of the Subject in the 20th Century has been initiated by literary theorists. It is the belief of the project's organizers that literature, along with the other arts, is the most important means of self-affirmation and self-analysis of the modern subject. Those disciplines that lean toward exactitude and generalization are forced to set aside the existential situation of the concrete individual consciousness. Nonetheless, literary criticism, in its function as a bridge between literature's concreteness and the abstraction of the exact sciences, must rely upon exchanges with the other Humanities to develop the framework for a critical theory of the subject. We must ask the systematic as well as the historically-oriented Human Sciences how and whether they will be able to take part in the discourse on modern humanity, on humanity's alienation as well as its possibilities for attaining authenticity.

2 Paul Geyer: The Critical Theory of the Subject in the 20th Century

The time has come to free the humanities from the fashionable postmodern jargon of the improper. Yet by no means does this entail a relapse into the old-fashioned jargon of the proper. A Critical Theory of the Modern Subject, which is methodologically built upon a Critical Theory of Discourse, mediates between the two and aims, in content, towards a Dialectical Anthropology.

A Dialectical Anthropology works – in defiance of all deconstructive or historical-positivistic renunciations – on a coherent value-based theory of the human subject in its historicity. Those who refuse to accept a changing and judging concept of mankind are also unable, or unwilling, to criticise the alienating phenomena of reality and of consciousness. In this sense, uncritical theory ends in a scientific l'art pour l'art and loses the power to combine with practice in regulative reciprocity. Admittedly, this would mean the end of the western path of the development of consciousness: for the oldest and most powerful tradition of the western intellect in its Greco-Roman as well as its Judaeo-Christian affiliation is the critique of consciousness. If one relinquishes it, one gives up on the actual state of consciousness and abandons oneself to non-understood practice. In this respect, postmodern ‘thought’ is no less ideological and conformist than the
traditional humanities, which, with their concept of autonomy, still at least confront a critical counter-image to alienated and alienating forms of reality.

The work on a *Dialectical Anthropology* can not, however, simply be repositioned where earlier *Critical Theories* have already failed. The ideologism and naivety of bourgeois-idealist, as well as Marxist-materialist, concepts of autonomy must be sublated in a realistic concept of the subject. The modern subject, in his or her inner tension between striving for autonomy and self-alienation, may be seen as the result of the processes of rationalisation and internalisation (which may also be described as the "Dialectics of Enlightenment" in the sense of Horkheimer and Adorno). The driving force of this process is the increasing ‘mediatization’ of the individual subject in relation to other subjects, to objects and to him/herself. In the course of the modern age, the ‘mediatization’ of human consciousness reached a point at which the gain in autonomy threatened to change into a loss of the self. Modern consciousness feels itself to be manifoldly mixed-up in unconscious psychic impulses, half-conscious mechanisms of repression, and ideological patterns of thought. It scarcely appears possible any more to locate a criterion for authentic subjectivity. This should not, however, be any excuse for the human sciences to call off the search for a criterion of authenticity – and thereby of criticism – right from the start. As sciences of meaning, they would be giving themselves up for lost.

On the other hand, the work on a *Dialectical Anthropology* is admittedly not even that new and therefore no unprecedented outline of a theory should be expected. In place of the rampant race to outdo of each new-fashioned paradigm of knowledge, we must begin with a return to the enduring in the thought of modern consciousness. Those who recently proclaimed the end of history are certainly correct, but not in the way they think they are. Rousseau’s *Discours sur l’origine et les fondements de l’inégalité parmi les hommes* (1755) was the first work to outline a historical-dialectical anthropology; Hegel’s *Logik* (1812-16) was the first work to analyse dialectical thought for itself. This is how the epistemological basis of modern consciousness was marked out. At this level one can either think further or fall behind – a shift of épistème will not occur again. The most successful attempts to work on a *Dialectical Anthropology* are those of Marx, Freud, Sartre and Adorno. The balance of their anthropology (including its deficits), as well as an up-to-date extrapolation of their endeavours of thought, must be able to provide a sturdy framework for a *Critical Theory of the Subject in the 20th Century*. The ways of functioning and structures of alienation of modern consciousness, as well as its struggle for authenticity, can be covered by a theoretical triangle between depth psychology, the analysis of "mauvaise foi", and the criticism of ideology.

Methodologically, a *Dialectical Anthropology* relies on the elaboration of a *Critical Theory of Discourse*. A *Critical Theory of Discourse* results from research within the tri-polar discursive landscape of the modern age. Only those who think within the framework of a tri-polar discursive landscape can avoid the aporias of post-structuralist thought. Foucault’s concept of discourse and Derrida’s concept of deconstruction both imply a dualistic theory of discourse composed of the scientific-unambiguous and metaphoric-ambiguous modes of discourse. They do not allow for a third dialectical mediating agency between these two modes, and the two poles of discourse must therefore, paradoxically, merge into one another. In reality however, the critical-dialectical discourse of human values mediates between the two extreme discourses. Only in an open interrelation of contrasts between all three poles of discourse is the dialectic of freedom and engagement realised as a dynamic structural principle of the modern subject. The exact discourse cannot conceive of uniqueness, the metaphoric discourse cannot conceive of values. On the other hand, the exact discourse exerts an analytic controlling function over the dialectical; and the metaphorical discourse protects the dialectical playfully and non-commitally from logical petrification. Ideologies, alienations, and repressions reflect dysfunctionalities between the three poles of discourse. To reformulate it in terms of discourse analysis, the Dialectics of Enlightenment
henceforth consists in the development of a tri-polar discursive landscape, and, at the same time, in
tendency to destroy this landscape again: the discourse of mankind and its history threatens to be
crushed between the two extreme discourses.

And it is here that modern literature and its studies now takes on a decisive role; its discourse is
most widely spread out between the discourse of exact science and the ambiguous-metaphoric
discourse. Literary studies is, like all sciences of meaning, a hybrid discourse. On the one hand, it
can be assigned, like narrative, drama, and the non-metaphoric part of poetry to the middle dialectic
pole of discourse, within which values are negotiated. On the other hand, however, literary studies
also serves the exact discourse in its critical task, within which literary studies is both superior, as
well as inferior, to literature. It is superior to literature because the exact discourse exposes
metaphysical petrifactions and is also able to criticise ideologies and mechanisms of "mauvaise foi",
which in modern literature are 'simply' represented. Literary studies is inferior to literature because
in its high degree of generality, and its proximity to the exact discourse, it cannot comprehend
concrete subjectivity. Only literature can, in its capacity for mimetic concretization, do justice to the
unique and problematic modern subject. That is why literary studies tend, like all sciences of
meaning, to narrative differentiation, the more it approaches the concrete subject.

It is not by chance that the initiative for a "Critical Theory of the Subject in the 20th Century" is
based in the discipline of literary studies. Literature is an important, if not the most important,
instrument and medium of self-affirmation and self-critique of the modern subject. Disciplines such
as sociology, psychology, economics, philosophy and jurisprudence tend towards both precision and
generalisation, but must to a large extent put aside the existential situation of concrete individual
consciousness. Nevertheless, literary studies, in its bridging function between the concreteness of
literature and the abstraction of science, depends upon the interdisciplinary exchange with the other
human sciences in order to develop the economic, legal, social and psychological conditions of the
framework of a Critical Theory of the Modern Subject. This aside, the question must still be
directed towards these sciences as to if, and how, they are in a position to take part in a critical
discourse about the people of the modern age, about their alienation, and also about their chances of
authenticity.

In detail, for example, the following questions to neighbouring disciplines are also conceivable:

- Is there still a concept of the proper, authentic life in philosophy and educational science?
- Is there still a concept of justice in jurisprudence?
- Can Freud be extrapolated in the direction of a Critical Theory of the Modern Subject?
- Is there still a position which is critical of capitalism in economics?
- How is a criticism of ideology possible?
- Is there still a value-oriented position in sociology?
- How can cultural studies form the basis of a value-based concept of culture?
- How is a critical theory of media possible?
- Which concept of the subject does gender studies use to back up its critical grasp?
- What function do art and music serve in the 20th Century?
- To what extent can classical-philology, the history of philosophy, the science of history, or
  the history of pre-modern literature contribute to a Critical Theory of the Subject in the 20th
  Century? Do these disciplines need a Critical Theory of the Subject?
- Which disciplines would be relevant for the work on a Critical Theory of Discourse?
3 Roland Hagenbüchle The Critical Dimension of Art (abbreviated version)

Among the three principal types of discourse, the scientific discourse has assumed an increasingly dominant role these days, with biology – based on the recent advances in genetic research – now claiming to be the master discourse. This type of discourse has been berated by the Frankfurt school as an expression of "instrumental reason" (Horkheimer) and of "rational expediency" (Weber). Instead of serving society, technological and economic means are misused to secure their own self-preservation. It is in art that Adorno locates a counter-discourse powerful enough to curb the influence of the one-dimensional scientific discourse. In view of the spread of Euro-American mass culture, the realm of art appears to offer a refuge from the onslaught of a technocratic civilisation which no longer regards human beings as an end in themselves (Kant), but merely as tools to advance socio-economic and political objectives. Though Adorno is not unaware that the sphere of art, too, is in danger of falling prey to trendy mass culture, he insists that the subject is nowhere more resistant to conformity than in works of art. Art registers the subject even at its weakest and raises its imminent disappearance into visibility. While unable to offer fixed guidelines, art lends us a voice (Winfried Wehle). It educates the powers of the imagination and wakes in us the feeling of "what it means to be another" (Adam Smith). According to Joachim Ritter, art alone is capable of summoning forth the full wealth of human existence. Society needs art as a means of self-expression; without it, it lacks a common (and communal) reality.

In addressing the question why art in general and literary art in particular is to be considered a special haven for human subjectivity and for human values, we may – with Kant and Hegel – point to the anti-instrumental quality of art, over and above which literary art is characterized by a high degree of linguistic precision. Literature’s nuanced language offers a stubborn resistance to simplistic clichés and a (culturally internalized) tendency toward prejudice. In this respect, artists and writers may rightly be designated "the conscience of a nation," but in this role they also have to shoulder a heavy responsibility.

The resilience of art to all attempts at instrumentalizing people lies in the simple fact that works of art consider individuals in their full range of thoughts, feelings, actions, and relations. The concept of the ‘person’ as handled in art thus enriches the philosophical and socio-political uses of the term in fundamental ways. Art never contents itself with theoretical reflexions and universal principles. Instead, it is concerned with lived experience and with people’s individual responsibilities arising from concrete human situations: tua res agitur. This critical (as well as self-critical) dimension of art is central to our project.

(For bibliographic notes, see the more detailed German version)


4.1 The current controversy about the "subject"

The discussion of the subject and its current problematic seems unable to manage without inverted commas ("subject"): Consciousness stands as a problem, as perhaps the central problem of the present discursive landscape, faced as it is with a considerable confusion of concepts and diagnoses. There is no consensus about how the concept of the "subject" can be more concretely determined, nor about how to describe the present situation (or non-situation) of this ominous authority. At best, a basic area of agreement can be established in view of the diagnosis that the "subject" is in crisis, but even the evaluations of this crisis are already diverging once again. Every discourse is concerned with the problematic of the subject: the epistemological and the scientific,
just as the ethico-pragmatic and the literary-aesthetic, the philosophical, the juridical, the economic, etc.

Two positions can be contrasted with each other in a completely gross and schematic manner: according to one, the "death" of the "subject" is the characteristic signature of the modern age (or, at the latest, of the so-called postmodern age), initiated by Nietzsche’s critique of western metaphysics, supported by recent scientific-theoretical models, and dramatically illustrated by the course of recent history. The other position asserts itself in the residues of subjectivity – the subject also asserts him/herself in his/her crisis, even though he/she is not "master in his/her own house." The "death" of the "subject", coupled with the "Death of God" (Nietzsche) and the proclaimed end of logocentrism, is ambiguously judged by those who diagnosed it: on the one hand, it is seen as the catastrophic loss of an orienting centre of human thought and behaviour; on the other, as freedom from inherited and, in a negative sense, fictional schemata of thought.

The variety and heterogeneity of the reactions to the crisis of the subject correspond to the ambivalence of the various evaluations. Destructive and constructive tendencies act complementarily to each other; but refuge is also sought, which might in the end still be regarded as a manifestation of the "subject". A determined reaction to the diagnostic of the crisis consists, for example, in the reaffirmation of the individual.

The significance of the current discussion about the "subject", its crisis, or even its "death" can only be judged against the background of its long and complex history, which is more than simply the history of the word and the concept. The differentiation of "epochs" in this history is meaningful, but at the same time in need of a reflective, interpretative intervention. This basically holds true for the following gross subdivisions of epochs, which can be laid down as a framework for the variety of historical textual-phenomena: the invention and differentiation of the "subject"; the emphatic self-assertion of "subjectivity"; the results of this crisis and the pronouncements of death; the destruction and reconstruction of the "subject".

The central significance of the discussion of the "subject" for the various discourses (scientific, epistemological, ethical etc.) necessitates its varied consequences. In many cases these are perceived as "crises" (and here the fundamental ambivalence of crises must be taken into consideration), which on the one hand destabilise, but on the other hand open up room to move for new thoughts and actions. The problematic of the subject is associated with, amongst others, crises of articulation (the problematic of language), crises of communication, crises of the self-consciousness of active human beings, as well as crises of orientation concerning space, time and history. The crisis of the "subject" may moreover be generally described as a crisis of "meaning" in as much as it stands definitively in the western horizon of thought at the disposal of a meaning-creating, meaning-establishing, safeguarding authority.

4.2 The Crisis of the Subject as a Challenge to Literary Studies

Literature and literary studies are, according to the leading working hypothesis, particularly concerned with the question of the "subject", its history, its crisis, and its (finished or continuing) role within the various discourses, namely for two reasons:

● **Firstly**, that which asserts itself as a "subject" is manifested primarily in the medium of language, or, more exactly, in the form of texts. The working hypothesis, which will be verified in the course of the investigation, shows that language takes on a dominant position among the other forms of expression of the "subjective". Texts, as linguistic constructions, are the medium in which the "subject", each according to their own perspective of description is expressed, reflexively constituted, or even "invented". (The significance of other media, for instance the fine arts (the key term here is ‘central perspective’) for the
western subject and its history should not be denied; but it is doubtful whether any medium "manages" (where the "subject" is concerned) without the company, commentary, interpretation, and meaning which is expressed through the linguistic medium).

- **Secondly**, language is also the pre-eminent medium of the negotiation, discussion, and formation of judgements about the "subject": crises, such as the findings of re(affirmation) are written textually; texts reflect the subject and its problematic. Although this does not always occur under the presumption of unambiguous diagnoses, for in the event of ambivalent results and obvious contradictions, linguistic-textual reflection is irreplaceable by any other medium.

The history of the subject can and must be read as history of texts. Literary studies as the study of texts is challenged here unlike any other science: according to the relevant working hypothesis, the task and authority of literary studies does not restrict itself to the description and classification of literary texts in any narrow sense. Literary studies should be understood instead as a science, whose genuine interest is in forms of language and of writing per se, in its conditions of possibility, its consequences, and implications is valid; for both the current, as well as the virtual forms of language.

In the early modern era, every type of writing and textual genre developed as forms of literary communication in which the awakening self-consciousness of the modern subject is articulated and mirrored. This formation of types of writing, the consequences of which extend into the present, is subordinate to the constitution of modern subjectivity, but it portrays the medial space within which the "subject" can first constitute him/herself.

On the other hand crises and the (alleged or actual) "death" of the subject are likewise pre-eminently readable in the medium of texts. This includes both texts which formulate the relevant diagnoses positively and with regard to content, and also ways of writing and of articulation which structurally reflect the placing in question and, possibly, the dissolution of subjectivity; and which also gesticulally demonstrate it and thereby enforce it as a paradigm. Texts and ways of writing of this type have (like those before, in and through which modern subjectivity constitutes itself) a marked performative feature: they realise or de-realise that which is explicitly or implicitly debated.

**A Review**

The representation of the history of the "subject" as a history of texts, with the emphasis on the literary dimension of this history, can be subdivided as follows:

**Literary history as the history of the "subject": outlines and outlines from within**

**The crisis of the "subject" as an object of literary thematisation**
- Crises of articulation as objects of literary thematisation
- Crises of communication as objects of literary thematisation
- The crisis of "history" as an object of literary thematisation
- The crisis of "meaning" as an object of literary thematisation

**Structural consequences of the crisis of the "subject" for the medium of literature**
- The problem of authorship and of "meaning"
- The problematic self-foundation of writing (writing in the area of conflict between the self-articulation and the self-dissolution of the ego)
4.3 Three areas of research: a model for interdisciplinary reflection on the thematic of the subject

The various thematic circles of reflection on the "subject" can be differentiated in a concentrically ordered arrangement.

The subject as reflected in the grand discourses

The "subject" constitutes him/herself – through reflection – through the medium of the different grand discourses: the philosophical and scientific, the aesthetic, the ethico-religious. The objects of textual-scientific analysis here are the modalities of this constitution; the question must be asked as to the modalities of articulation and description of the "subjective" on the basis of, or in the horizon of, the respective rules of the game of these discourses (such as the rules of the discourse of the science of history, the natural sciences, the philosophical, the psychological, the sociological, the theological, the juridical, the medical, the economic, that of information theory etc.). Leading the way is the working hypothesis that the scientific, philosophical, juridical (etc.) discourses also possess a "literary" dimension, in so far as they are bound to the formation of texts, the testing of ways of speaking and verbal forms of mediation. Diachronic and synchronic ways of looking at things should support and complement each other here. One possible key question, which would overlap disciplines, would be as to the differentiation of the results (according to each discourse) of the alienation of the subject "in his/her own house" by the types, grades and consequences of the experience of alienation as reflected in the prevailing discourse. To put the question more generally, what status does the "other" of the subject have in the prevailing grand discourse and in the prevailing individual discipline – and how is it described and assessed?

The subject as reflected in literary textual genres and ways of writing

In the contemplation of textual-worlds as spaces for the construction, or deconstruction, of "subjectivity" those literary texts which (starting partly explicitly from an experimental position which inquires about the "subject") establish ways of speaking and of writing, move into view and are applied to the constitution, representation and articulation or even the deconstruction of "subjectivity".

The specific modalities of literary articulation or representation are manifoldly understood from the point of view of their relation to the subject as constitutive of genre. Thus, poetic speech traditionally thinks of itself as the self-expression of a lyrical "I". The medium of narrative serves in recent literary history as the manifold attempts of self-representation, self-explanation, self-justification, and in the end, also as the self-invention of a "subject" of speech. Conversely, recent literary history is characterised by the development of types of writing and textual genres in which the problematisation and the (threatened or realised) sublation of the "subject" is reflected.

Stylistic-critical, rhetorical, generic-poetological and metaphorological studies all have their systematic place in relation to this, as do further studies on the development and differentiation of models (with whose help the "subject" and its structure or de-structuring may be described), studies on the modalities of self-representation, particularly on ways of speaking and of narrating, within whose medium the "subject" survives and develops. The literary manifestations and forms of the
"alien" or "other" can be regarded as complementing this. Modern literature stands in varied and complex relations to the "alien", be it (for example) that they proceed with diagnostics of alienation; or be it that they develop the techniques of alienation themselves. Even literary experiments with models of "de-centred" representation, or representation from multiple perspectives, utilise polyphonic speech, and although on the way to its negation they are still related to the (collective) literary project of the "subject".

**Explicit thematisation and problematisation of the "subject" in the medium of literature**

Explicit confrontations with the thematic of the subject can be placed exactly in the central field of those literary ways of speaking and writing which are related to the subject. Texts which expressly discuss the crisis of the subject belong here, as do those which are arranged either in order to reflect theory, or by the course of the narrative.

The medium of literature makes the question of the subject, with significant and pointed emphasis, that of the subject of literary speech itself – the question of the "author" and his/her authority. The history of the "subject" would be, all in all, writeable as the history of the "author". Literary reflections on authorship and authority, admittedly with a positive as well as a negative accentuation, can be regarded as particularly meaningful contributions to a reflexive illumination of the thematic of the subject.

**A Further Summary**

Toward the end of literary studies’ investigation of the conditions, modalities, and functions of a reflection on the "subject", different neighbouring thematic fields and related perspectives have opened up. Such thematic fields include: *The end of metaphysical systems and the discovery of the history of reason.*

**The re-evaluation of the aesthetic throughout the modern age**

- The affirmation of ambiguity
- The affirmation of plurality
- Irony and paradox

**The dialectical tension between theoretical and aesthetic modes of representation**

- The critique of rationality in the medium of literature
- Metaphoricity versus conceptuality
- Narrative as (replacement-)reason: The significance of "stories" as the surrogates of "history"
- The abolition of the theoretical-abstract discourse in the poetic process of representation

**Enlightenment and Meta-Enlightenment: literature as a reflection on the possibilities and borders of the self-transparency of the subject, the competency and borders of rationality, and the relationship of the rational to the "other" of reason.**

In dealing with these three thematic circles, their association must always be taken into consideration. Influences occur both within the three concentric circles, as well as from the outside inwards (from the discursive "landscape" to the specific literary experiment). They also occur the
other way around: literature reacts to the practising modalities of representation and ways of speaking of the scientific, philosophical, juridical (etc.) discourse, it also presents, however, suggestions as to the address of sciences, and sets an example as to how it can be spoken, described, and represented.

The non-linguistic aesthetic media stand in a different relation to the thematic of the subject than the textual-literary medium does, which should also be taken into consideration. Thus, central-perspectivistic representation documents itself in its career in exactly the same way as the current epoch-specific preferential treatment of certain subjects; particularly however also the confrontation of the fine arts with subjectivity and its implications in the history of portrait art; in the history of music particularly important accents are placed on the aesthetics of expression.

Two particular thematic fields are of interest here to literary- or textual-studies:

- Analogies, parallels and structural common features of the reflection on the "subject"
- The literary thematisation of neighbouring media under the aspect of their relation to the subject (as articulations, representations, refuges or even negations of the "subject")
Abstracts

1 International Involvement and the Growth of a Canadian Identity in Hugh MacLennan’s Barometer Rising (HEINZ ANTOR, Anglistik, Köln)

In 1941, the Canadian writer Hugh MacLennan published Barometer Rising, the first novel in a trilogy dealing with issues of Canadian national identity. In this book, MacLennan describes the growth of a Canadian self-consciousness through the eyes of a cast of characters involved in the Canadian effort to support the allied cause in the First World War. It is through this involvement in international politics as well as through the consequent experience of the specificity of what Canada can do for the world that national and psychological independence is stipulated for Canadians in a post-colonial argument that uses the alterity of colonialist European attitudes as a foil for the construction of a new and distinct Canadian national identity that aims at putting Canada on the map as an equal partner, no longer an adjunct at the colonial margin, but a post-colonial centre in its own right. This is enacted in a plot based on of the traumatic events surrounding the famous Halifax Explosion of 1917, a catastrophe in which the consequences of the First World War became felt not only in Europe, but on Canadian soil and the shock waves of which initiated a process of a national coming of age that in the novel results in the development of a sense of Canadian identity. Consequently, in this talk, MacLennan's novel will be interpreted as the literary manifestation of a nascent discourse of Canadian nationalism which provides us with an interesting example of processes of collective subject constitution in the aftermath of colonialism.

2 The Modernity of Sophocles (STEFAN BÜTTNER, Klassische Philologie, Marburg)

Especially since Goethe, the characters of the Greek tragedy have been admired for their outstanding unity and plasticity, but at the same time they have been considered a model for human beings unthinkable today. Living in a cosmos of gods and those gods' determining advice as well as being surrounded by the canon of values of the polis community, they lacked the autonomy of the modern subject and the peculiarities of freedom, interiority and individuality associated with this autonomy.

When interpreting certain dramas, research has often led to quite incongruous, almost contrary results. This happened when Prometheus, in the drama of the same name by Aeschylus, turned out to not be a human, but rather an immortal titan. But still as such he served as a prototype for a kind of self-responsible thought and action which had no need for divine salvation and just needed to be transferred to humans. In the work of Euripides, who Schlegel, Burckhardt and Nietzsche saw as a corrupting reformer of Greek culture, one can see the conclusion of this modern thought in Greek drama.

Even Sophocles, known for the ancient plasticity of his characters, seems to have clothed them in modern costume. His character of Elektra, seen as internally isolated, can be considered a complete turn towards the human element; the absolute pain of Elektra, forced to rely only on herself, shows the vulnerability of human existence.

Sophocles' Elektra will therefore be used to see whether these categories, based mainly on the existential philosophy of the 20th century, can be found in ancient drama, or whether their application in the interpretation of ancient works is only an indication of the considerable influence this philosophy had in the 20th century. If the latter is true (as some evidence seems to suggest), then we must explain in more detail which concept (different from the modern direction) of freedom, individuality and interiority we can expect to find in a play by Sophocles.
We shall contrast Sophocles’ character portrayal in Elektra and Sartre's conscious readaptation of the material and character of Elektra in Les Mouches, and let this process offer us inspiration for an anthropology that proposes a compromise between, on the one hand, the (hardly realizable) idea of an autonomous subject and, on the other hand, the concept of a divine or materialistic determination that robs humankind of its freedom.

3 **Psychohistorical Archaeology of Modern Individuality: Transformations of Desire at the End of the 18th Century.** (VERENA EHRICH-HAEFELI, Germanistik, Genf)

The transformations of desire and of the status assigned to it are a key element in the transformation of subjectivity that occurs at the threshold between the ancien regime and bourgeois modernity, at the end of the 18th century. What the enlightened pedagogues called "animal lust" is celebrated by the young generation of the 1770s as a "holy fire". Whereas desire had been thought of before as something impersonal, alien to the ego, as a mainly physical affect to be kept under strict ego control -- be this in the sense of the bourgeois system of ascetic virtue, or in the sense of the libertine's hedonistic management of his pleasures --, in the texts of the young 'genies' of the 1770s, desire is being adopted as the innermost core of the self, as its central energy -- a source of bliss unknown before and of newly destructive conflicts as well; a source also of the new dynamics of striving that drives modern individuality forward in its unending search for itself. A structure of built-in conflict henceforth characterizes the subject that is aware of itself both as an autonomous subject of reason and as a sujet du désir.

The three versions of 'love' mentioned above will be analyzed using texts by Lessing, by Wieland, and by Maler Müller. Psychohistorical archeology is looking for an explanation of this change towards 'romantic' love by means of a methodological approach that combines discourse-analysis, psychoanalytic and sociohistorical text-analysis and gender studies. It will be shown that the new value conferred upon sexuality by assigning it to the emotional core of the self is related to the differentiation of gender roles that occurs during this period and, in particular, transforms the sphere of primary socialization. The appearance of a new kind of 'Mütterlichkeit' and maternal love is visible, in its various consequences, in the literary texts of grown sons, though it is still ignored by the contemporary pedagogues and popular philosophers. We can observe here the emergence of those psychic structures that Freud will analyze a century later.

4 **Focalizations: Sensory Perception and its Medialization in Early 20th Century Spanish Poetry** (SABINE FRIEDRICH, Romanistik, Bonn)

The philosophies of life and existence that were well-known in Spain at the beginning of the 20th century understand being as an unending process. A temporal structure of self-consciousness is tied to this and leads to an extremely unstable, dynamic model of the subject that is a constant process of becoming. Particularly in the case of the philosophy of life, the experience of one's own subjectivity is related to the tactile perception of one's body. In contrast to visual perception which, according to Bergson, records only discontinuous, static images, tactile perception represents the immediate presence of one's body and corresponds to the temporality of being. Tactile perception of the body is considered by the life philosophers as the authentic experiencing of self which is under threat of disappearance in the visual perceptual rush of modern culture (comp. Simmel).

In contrast to this, Jonathan Crary shows in his latest study Suspensions of Perception. Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture (MIT Press 1999), which revolves around the relationship between perception and subject constitution at around 1900, that sensory overload by no means leads inevitably to self-alienation or to an impoverishment of experience. After the model of a supposedly
timeless, identical subject has become obsolete, at the beginning of the 20th century new practices have come about which help to create a central point of stability - although only temporary - from which the subject can act. This happens, according to Crary, through the focusing of attention on the part of the perceiving subject. The ever-readjusting focusing of attention leads to a procedural model of the subject that corresponds to the temporal dynamics of the philosophy of life without taking on its pessimistic assumptions about culture.

On this backdrop I would like to show, using several poems by the Spanish poet Pedro Salinas, to what degree tactile perception represents authentic experience of the world and of self. However, at the same time I would like to show that the spread of modern media of perception and communication invalidates the opposition between immediate corporeal experience and experience mediated through technology. Regardless of the stimulatory mediateness, it is exclusively a question of the sensory perception of a subject that refocuses its attention within the flood of stimulatory influences. The virulent debate within the context of life philosophy around 1920 shows a number of parallels to the current situation. Due to technological advances in communication and perception, the simulation of corporeal experience became possible. This clearly shows that tactile perception is no guarantee for the actual presence of the body. Regardless of their origins, the sensory impulses offer the subject temporary opportunities for focusing and therefore orientation.

5 Critique of the Concept of Criticism (PAUL GEYER, Romanistik, Köln)

Scientific theory was at first a critique of mythic and metaphysical thought. And through such criticism a new type of subjectivity came into being. This subject and this conception of criticism came into their own in Montesquieu's system theory, in Rousseau's historical philosophy and in Kant's transcendental philosophy. What seemed to be a paradoxical result was the loss of binding value criteria for critique as well as authentic subjectivity. Due to this loss, critique became simultaneously all-encompassing and bottomless: in modern culture every human action (and inaction) places one value in opposition to other values (Max Weber). With this as its foundation, a 'Critical Theory' can only concern itself with uncovering the value system behind human (linguistic) activity. It makes us conscious of the images of humanity implied by our value judgments, and maintains a gap between the consciousness and its being. In contrast to this, postmodern scepticism surrenders the consciousness to the forces of that which exists anyway. It is predisposed to promote a reversal of public's structural change in modern times through which the bourgeois subject's privacy and interiority were created. However in 20th-century literature and art, the tendencies of dissolution and resistance of this type of subjectivity have come together in an exemplary fashion.

6 Brain, Mind, and the Limitations of a Scientific Theory of Human Consciousness (ALFRED GIERER, Max-Planck-Institut für Entwicklungsbiologie, Tübingen)

Modern brain research related to consciousness has resulted in many interesting insights, such as the neurobiological basis of attention and of language. In biological terms, human consciousness appears as a system's feature of our brain, with neural processes strictly following the laws of physics. This does not necessarily imply, however, that there can be a general and comprehensive scientific theory of consciousness. Predictions of the extent to which such a theory may become possible vary widely in the scientific community. There are reasons - not only practical but also epistemological - why the brain-mind relation may not be fully decodable by finite procedures. In particular, analogies with mathematical theorems of undecidability suggest that self-referential features of consciousness, such as multiple self-representations like those involved in strategic thought, may not be fully resolvable by brain analysis. Assuming such limitations exist, this implies that objective analysis cannot exhaust subjective experience in principle. A person's consciousness
and will are accessible to external observation only within limits. In some respects, we do not even learn to know ourselves except by our actions. It thus appears that a scientific look at consciousness and the human mind, combining universal physicality with epistemological scepticism, is not inconsistent with certain concepts of subjectivity that are current in the humanities, despite all the differences in the style and terminology of discourse.

7  Freud's Theory of the Unconscious and its Importance for a Critical Theory of the Subject (BERNARD GÖRLICH, Psychologie, Frankfurt a.M.)

My presentation revolves around the interest in Freud as articulated and justified on the one hand in the original Critical Theory, and on the other hand in the issues surrounding the relationship between psychoanalysis and the theory of society, or rather culture, that have been debated since the 1970s. Using examples from these domains, while giving special attention to the gaps uncovered through our investigation of these examples, I will try to characterize the scope of research of a critical theory of the subject having a Freudian orientation. I also plan to discuss the following relationships, simply listed here in chronological order: Horkheimer's Freudian conception of 'biological materialism', Marcuse's cultural-philosophical interpretation of the Freudian question of eros and death wish, and Lorenzer's meta-theoretical reformulation of Freudian discoveries regarding the object (conception of drives) as well as the process ('scenic understanding').

8  The Post-Utopian Rebirth of the Subject in the Periphery: On Contemporary Non-Castilian-Language Poetry in Spain (JAVIER GÓMEZ-MONTERO, Romanistik, Tübingen)

From the point of view of marginal, minoritized contemporary literary discourses (such as the non-Spanish-language poetry of Spain) the much-discussed declaration of the death of the subject seems to be simply another episode of decentered thought in Occidental Modernism. In contemporary Basque, Catalan and Galician poetry one can find traces of a subject that, in the periphery, developed post-utopian strategies for aesthetic re-centering on the ruins of the ontological project of Modernism. Language and territory operate as definitive hermeneutic categories that reformulate discourses of identity far from the traditional centers of Modernism. A good text for testing this hypothesis is the following anthology of poetry which will appear in September of 2000: Territorios de la Poesía - Territorien der Lyrik in Spanien. Multilingual anthology (German/Spanish, Basque, Galician, Catalan). Javier Gómez-Montero (ed.). Edition Tranvia/Berlin.

9  The Actual Death of the Subject in the Production of a Work of Art as a Challenge to the Perceiving Subject (ANTJE VON GRAEVENITZ, Kunstgeschichte, Köln)

[only in German]

10  Literary Experience and Modern Subjectivity (BETTINA GRUBER, Germanistik, Innsbruck)

My presentation is concerned with the massive reduction in status that the category of experience has been subjected to in various prominent 20th-century literary theories, both in its relationship to the concept of the subject and in its banishment from modernity. Particular emphasis will be placed
on discovering the roots of those theories that see a depletion of experience in modernity when seen against the backdrop of earlier societies. Within this context, I would especially like to discuss the work of Walter Benjamin, but also aspects of system theory, Deconstructivism and media theories.

11  **Face, Self-Portrait, Portrait (Reflections on the Interplay of the Categories: I, Ego, Individual, Subject) (MICHEL GUERIN, Lettres et Sciences Humaines, Marseille)**

As soon as an artist, writer or painter states something about the subject that he is himself, or about some other subject, he is playing, with a more or less focused awareness, a complex game of implications and oppositions; these have repercussions on several registers: linguistic, psychological, political, aesthetic and cosmological...

Let us illustrate this using a well-known paradigm. The perspective common to pictorial arts in the Quattrocento like "costruzione legittima" is not only, according to Piero della Francesca's formulation, "rospectiva pingendi": it legitimizes itself as a 'symbolic form' (E. Panofsky) in that it reinterprets the entirety of experience. If, henceforth, infinite space affects finite objects, it is because in it the human individual appears to be less a creature than a subject organizing the world in his own image. The painting becomes (in the case of the fresco) an alienable piece of real estate. The 'majestic subject' proves the perfect equation of centered representation and of central power, and so on.

Thus a mechanism is put into place for a time that absorbs the I in its enunciatory act, and makes the subject emphatic. It lets through an ego invisible to the naked eye and incompatible with the storia. Rembrandt's art (particularly his self-portraits) seemingly contests the blinding brightness of the painting by depicting a face in the night, indescribable as an apparition that cannot be reduced to the test of appearance - in the same way that Pascal's fragments undermine the logic of the discourse. Both give away the secret: the subject is not a principle of evidence reversed through the obviousness of the principle, but rather a fragile construction, a unitas multipliex always under threat of ruin and perpetually recast.

The deconstruction of the subject is not as recent as one sometimes claims after all; it flanks its construction, showing by one means or another the position and role of its constituents which are the I (of the speech act), the individual (in its abandon, indeed its dereliction - more or less sensitive), the ego (in all its forms of expression) and finally the subject (in the required position, between glory and discomfit). Confined to the narrow limits of the aim at hand, it is obviously not about the quick classification of things, but rather about using several literary and pictorial paradigms to illustrate the configurations which make a subject appear (and therefore an époque - a kind of freeze-frame) within and by means of a certain distribution of the constituents. We will finish by taking a cursory theoretical inventory of these constituents: the I, which exhausts itself in the act, the ego, which stirs up and (paradoxically) limits desire, the subject, where it formulates itself, and finally the individual - the one who pays the bill, which is to say the one that tacitly witnesses that this game has come into contact with something real.

12  **(De)Constructions of Subject and World in the Contemporary British Women's Novel (ANDREA GUTENBERG, Anglistik, München)**

While postmodern identity and world concepts currently seem to dominate American narrative literature and literary theory, this is only partly true for Britain, where the postmodern turn appears to be less encompassing. This cannot simply be attributed to the usual delay with which new literary or theoretical trends seem to spill over from America to Britain and the Continent. The British phenomenon of maintaining a continuing scepticism towards any radical form of postmodernism is
even more apparent if we turn to women's novels and, in conjunction, feminist theory. My thesis is that the paradigm changes from an epistemological to an ontological dominant, which Brian McHale claims as a marker for the transition from the modern to the postmodern period and which can be used to explain the changes within the British women's novel of the past 30 or 40 years. A similarly 'belated' development can be observed in feminist theory, which, especially from the 1990s onwards, has been troubled with postmodern questionings of some of its most central subject-related concepts, such as female agency and the sex/gender distinction. Starting out from the theoretical debate, the focus of this paper will be specifically on the way narrative negotiates modes of realism and postmodernism.

[see also the more detailed German version]

13 The Subject as a 'Grenzgänger' (ROLAND HAGENBÜCHLE, Amerikanistik, Zürich)

The essay focuses on the condition of 'in-betweenness' as the core quality of a new cultural paradigm. Residing in an interspace, the future subject is defined as 'Grenzgänger' traveling between and across different cultural terrains. Acknowledging the contact with the alter as a tense and highly ambivalent encounter, the essay investigates the postmodern subject and its pluralistic mode of existence in terms of heterogeneity and contiguity. In an effort to re-establish a common ground, various options are considered of how to transcend cultural borders. In conclusion, the essay advocates a bifocal perspective both as a way of exploring cultural difference and as a mode of analysis indispensable to critical self-reflection.

14 Writing subjects of governance - Woolf and Foucault (LESLEY HIGGINS / MARIE-CHRISTINE LEPS, English and American Literature, Toronto)

Virginia Woolf and Michel Foucault elaborate their critical theories of the subject by documenting and resisting the effects of 'governmentality', those mechanisms of power and domains of knowledge engaged in the governance of the one and the many. Their surprisingly complementary works simultaneously uncover the governmental deployment of security measures fostering the life of the population and each of its individuals, and initiate counter-active transformations. Subjectivity thus involves subjectivization and the conditions of possibility for self-elaboration as a practice of freedom.

This paper explores the dialogical encounter of imposition and resistance. We begin by specifying governmentality as the dominant mode of power in the twentieth century, then analyze how Woolf and Foucault variously trace its operations and effects. Foucault's genealogies, such as Discipline and Punish and The History of Sexuality, deal in broad strokes with epistemological and institutional shifts. Woolf's experimental, "so-called novels", including Mrs. Dalloway and Orlando, politicize the common categories of common sense to demonstrate the governing forces of normalization in the experience of every day. Meticulously, all of these texts reveal the inextricable ties between regimes of truth and relations of power, and their impact on body and soul.

It would be wrong, however, to think of governmentality simply in terms of repression. Foucault insists that power relations produce pleasures, induce desires, and delimit the horizons of personal and communal expectations. Individuals in the fullness or incompleteness of their ambitions and identities do not pre-exist techniques of governance, but are produced by them. Moreover, "points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network" (History of Sexuality 1: 95). The writings of Woolf and Foucault implement crucial strategies of resistance: their productive forms destabilize truth regimes, render established subject positions intolerable, and inaugurate the project...
of the self. (The latter is best understood as the French 'soi', a third-person reflexive pronoun, used for both genders, and usually referring to an indeterminate subject. It is thus a pre-eminently discursive pronoun, indicating position rather than person, perspective rather than singularity.)

Some may not be persuaded that discussing Woolf's novels in the same breath as Foucault's theory of governmentality is anything else but "politically unimportant and epistemologically vulgar" for both literary and critical theory (Power/Knowledge 110). In "Foucault Revolutionizes History", Paul Veyne describes the interrelations among discursive practices as follows: "A practice gives rise to the objectivizations that correspond to it, and it is anchored in the realities of the moment, that is, in the objectivizations of neighboring practices. Or, to be more precise, a practice actively fills the void left by neighboring practices; it 'actualizes' the potentialities that these neighboring practices prefigure in hollow form. If these practices are transformed, if the periphery of the hollow shifts, . . . the practice will actualize these new potentialities, and it will no longer be the same practice as before" (Foucault and his Interlocutors 162). This paper correlates the writings of Woolf and Foucault because of their common preoccupation with the experience of the governmentalized subject, and their shared goal of developing different modes of thought and agency. The differences among their works stem largely from generic practices, which bring to light complementary aspects of the same problematic. Novels can trace the effects of governmentality on individual lives during the course of a day or several centuries; discursive analyses and genealogies can make visible networks of institutional forces and their impact on the population as a whole. It is a difference of focus, not of kind: Woolf's gendered bodies are policed by institutions; Foucault's institutional sites produce "docile bodies." The objects of one discursive practice serve as grounds for the other; each sheds a light on the shadows of the other. Significantly, both writers produce what we term 'critical fictions', historically-specific yet anti-scientific texts which eschew overarching theories and abandon the need to discover or finally tell the truth. Instead, these texts articulate discursive practices, interfere with present arrangements and securities, and thereby actualize a space for the transformative redistribution of power. Critical fictions imagine differently even as they elaborate histories of the present; offending existing disciplinary and generic limits, inaugurating new, productive forms of writing, they summon the reader to participate in the writing subject's provocative analyses.

Revealing the contingency of subject positions thus makes possible the discursive delineation of new forms of the self. As Foucault suggests, "Maybe the target nowadays is not to discover what we are, but to refuse what we are. . . The conclusion would be that the political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our days is not to try to liberate the individual from the state, and from the state's institutions, but to liberate us both from the state and from the type of individualization which is linked to the state. We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries" (The Subject and Power 216). Or as Woolf sketches in her diary, "I' rejected: 'We' substituted: to whom at the end there shall be an invocation? 'We' . . . the composed of many different things . . . we all life, all art, all waifs and strays- a rambling capricious but somehow unified whole- the present state of mind?" (A Writer's Diary 276).

15 Unreliable Narration and the Critique of Subjectivity: Miguel Delibes' Cinco horas con Mario (CLAUDIA JÜNKE, Romanistik, Köln)

The central aspect of Miguel Delibes' 1966 novel, Cinco horas con Mario, is the interior monologue of the protagonist and first-person narrator Carmen Sotillo, who is spending five hours sitting by the corpse of her husband, thinking about their years of married life. Carmen begins her interior monologue in an accusatory tone, but in the end she is the one who is accused. The reader falls more and more into the role of a witnesses to the involuntary self-exposure of the narrator, who
ends up admitting that she had once nearly been unfaithful to her husband, a fact that weighs heavily on her mind. In retrospect her supposed accusation turns out to be instead a defense motivated by her guilty conscience.

Due to the particular structure of the narration, the novel can be regarded as an example for the technique of 'unreliable narration', which has been discussed by narratologists since the 1960s. However, the way this technique is applied in the novel seem to challenge traditional definitions of unreliable narration based on Wayne Booth's The Rhetoric of Fiction (1961). According to Booth, unreliable narration relies upon the ironic distance between the first-person narrator and the implied author, who allies himself with the reader behind the narrator's back. On the one hand this approach suggests that something like a single objective truth (the truth of the implied author) exists which could be qualified as 'reliable' and which could be represented linguistically in a reliable way by a (reliable) subject. On the other hand this concept suggests a subject aware of all his psychological processes and has a complete understanding of his motivations for his actions. This kind of ironic distance can be found, however, only in the context of the protagonist's ideological bias. Carmen is constantly reproducing the stereotypical ideas of the Franquist discourse, a language most contemporary readers will undoubtedly disapprove of. Concerning her psychology though, one can hardly continue to speak of a simple ironic distance. It is not only impossible to maintain an opposition between Carmen's unreliability and a reliable, reconstructable version. Moreover, the impossibility of this distinction is the constitutive element of the narratological strategy. The novel demonstrates how the concept of 'unreliable narration' can develop its own dynamics and how it can serve the portrayal of complex psychological realities. The novel deals with a subjective mental state and an individual view on life. Therefore, the attempt to reconstruct a reliable truth would not only be futile, but also of no great interest. In this novel unreliability mainly serves to present strategies of justification, attempts to harmonize inner conflicts and mechanisms of self-deception, which are significant for any subjectivity (including Mario's) and which are a result of a specific historical, political, social, individual, psychological and emotional situation. Different textual features (such as the inconsistencies and contradictions in the narrator's discourse, the secret logic underlying Carmen's argumentation, revealing associations / digressions / leitmotifs, the aggressive and evaluative language with its frequent explicit emphasis on the narrator's credibility or the discrepancy between her presentation and the authorial perspective of the prologue and the epilogue) allow the reader to gain an insight into an example of modern subjectivity and into the narrative strategies of its critique.

16 Individual and Historical Consciousness in Malraux' La Condition humaine (VOLKER KAPP, Romanistik, Kiel)

[only in German]

17 The Conception of Humanity in the Jurisprudence of Concepts and in the Jurisprudence of Interests (MARIANNE KLEIN, Rechtswissenschaften, Köln)

The jurisprudence of concepts and the jurisprudence of interests are two different methods of governance.

According to the jurisprudence of concepts, the European legal system grew from the spirit of Roman law as a super-individual, reasonable governance. Roman law is therefore the purest incarnation of the universal rule of natural law. The general conceptions which grew from it carry the rule of law within themselves and guarantee a self-sufficient, consistent unity that, due to the system's self-sufficiency, hardly leaves room for extension through the judiciary. The 'right of law'
on one hand and 'morality' on the other are strongly divided; 'being right' is the consequence of a legal norm, not a moral value judgment.

The jurisprudence of interests, in contrast, is based on the idea that the legal system was created and elaborated on by humankind with a particular purpose in mind and that all laws must originate in the conception and pursuit, and in the balance and execution of interests. The legal system creates its laws under the supervision and judgment of interests in such a manner that particular endeavors are promoted or regulated according to the legislator involved. Since the jurisprudence of interests does not see the legal system as closed, but rather as a system of laws reflecting their time of conception, it allows the creation and extension of law through judges when the applicable norms no longer serve the interests of those involved.

We must question which image of humanity is expressed in each of the legal systems and whether a intermediary form between the two is possible.


In his programmatic writings and poetic works Henri Michaux ties together a consciousness-critical poetics of the 'unconscious' which articulates itself in confrontation with the Freudian determination of the mental apparatus and stylizes his poetical project as a scientific experiment and an aesthetics of 'action' well aware of its violence, removing the border between communication and persuasion. This aesthetics of action presents the notion of the image production process in speech as the expression of verbal performance or of a material speech act that becomes the actual event within the text, and the writing subject forms itself within this speech act. The poetics of action places Michaux' prose poems within the cultural-historical experiential space of Modernism, liberating complex mechanisms of aesthetic perception (M. Foucault, W. Benjamin). In poetic texts, these mechanisms interpose themselves between imaginary spatial models that express an aesthetics of movement in which the borders between inside and outside, the familiar and alien, and one's self and the other are drawn as well as transgressed. Using selected prose poems, my presentation will investigate to what extent the various processes of aesthetic construction of self indicate a specific modern topology of the subject, which originates in the constitution of heterotopic spaces (M. Foucault) in which on the one hand complex intercultural processes of exchange occur, and in which on the other hand the subject is placed into a relationship with its own body.

19 Subjectivity in the Contemporary French Novel (WOLFGANG MATZAT, Romanistik, Bonn)

As Georg Lukács has most clearly pointed out in his Theorie des Romans (Theory of the Novel), the development of the modern novel is closely tied to the genesis of the various manners of subjective experience. According to Lukács, the novel reflects the dilemma of the modern subject which "can only hope to find the meaning of existence in its own homeless soul". Yet in this (as the outstanding example of Don Quijote shows) there has always been an implication of a critical view of such subjectivity in the extent that the individual consciousness' specific conceptions of the world and of itself are confronted with the framework of an intersubjectively constituted social reality. On this basis my presentation will seek to present the structural conditions which govern the modeling of subjectivity in the novel. This investigation of the poetics of the novel, which bases itself principally on the possibilities of representing perspective inherent to the genre, should form the foundation for discussion of examples from the contemporary French novel. We must ask ourselves how after the disappearance of the subject in the nouveau roman forms of subjective...
experience have become a current topic again in the works of authors like Modiano, Toussaint, Echenoz (and possibly Houellebecq).

20 Antinomies of a 'Prehistory of the Subject' - Variations on a Theme of Adorno (GÜNTHER MENSCHING, Philosophie, Hannover)

The Dialectic of Enlightenment investigates the reasons for the catastrophic end of the bourgeois world that seems to have taken place in 1945. Absolute governance led to the annihilation of those that were governed. If this was not the invasion of a sort of barbarity completely alien to civilization, and instead a continuation of civilization, then we must question the relationship between reason and governance from a more radical perspective: Is the form of reason that has manifested itself up until now a means of governance whose continued application has required ever greater sacrifices? Could governance as an institution be the single most important concept in the entirety of history up until now? Can reason and humanity ever be unified?

But then we are confronted with the problem of how a governor is chosen. This question crops up throughout the Dialectic of Enlightenment and was resolved aporetically by postulating that the subject, as the vanguard of reason in prehistoric times, defined itself as an instance of power which history has chosen to present as the progress of humanity.

But the Negative Dialectic takes this topic and adds a speculative light to it. According to Adorno, this process of reflection shifts toward its own origins, which claim to contain the earliest traces of the subject. Cultural products, particularly those of philosophy and art, prove again and again the subject's seemingly inextricable entanglement with the barbarity that made the subject possible in the first place, but they also anticipate the subject's liberation from this perpetual evil.

This discussion will present this motif in such a way that its contradictions and the reasons for these contradictions become apparent. It should also illustrate the thesis that to derive reason and its subject from something they are not is, according to Adorno's assertions, aporetic. The assumption that some sort of mischief occurred in early history has led to irresolvable historical and philosophical antinomies. Neither a kind of revolutionary messianism like that proposed by Walter Benjamin, nor the surrendering of an allegedly dead subject as some postmodern theorists preach, nor least of all an optimistic theory of evolution can help us out of this cul-de-sac. It is therefore advisable to read Adorno's relevant works closely in order to determine the possible role that reflection plays in them. What power can an enlightenment possess that, according to Adorno, reflects itself?

21 Toward an Alternative Mode of Intersubjectivity in Virginia Woolf's The Waves (MARIETTA MEßMER, Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Göttingen)

Commenting on The Waves (1931), Virginia Woolf explains that the novel's seven characters do not conform to the traditional, realist notion of characters; in addition, she insists that they are "supposed to be one" subjectivity (Letters IV, 397). Most subsequent readers thus interpret Woolf's construction of The Waves' seven interacting and partially merging figures as her critique of modern subjectivity, and in particular her explorations of the reasons for and forms of an alienated modern existence. Moreover, acknowledging the ontological and political dimensions of Woolf's radical aesthetic experiments, current discussions productively interpret Woolf's resistance to constructing fully individualized 'selves' as her challenge to the Cartesian model (and masculinist ideal) of a rationalist, unified, autonomous identity.

At the same time, however, The Waves moves beyond advocating the mere death or dissolution
of the individual "self." Rather than insisting on a complete merger of the seven figures (and hence a complete rejection of the notions of autonomy and individualization), Woolf strives toward an alternative mode of subjectivity that both exceeds and transcends the individual subject. Caught in between autonomy and self-alienation, the figures in this novel move from a state of collective existence (characterized by a complete dependency on others' opinions and value systems) toward different stages of autonomy, individuation, and self-fulfillment, which, however, frequently turn again into self-loss. Yet this simultaneous quest for and questioning of an essential selfhood has so far primarily been read in gendered terms: as Woolf's construction of an androgynous intersubjectivity dismantling traditional Victorian gender binaries.

At the same time, however, I would argue that Woolf's dialectical oscillation between affirmation and dissolution of 'selfhood' can also have further political implications. In her theoretical study of the modern subject as situated between autonomy and powerlessness (Illusionen von Autonomie: Dieseits von Ohnmacht und Allmacht des Ich), Käte Meyer-Drawe, for example, analyzes the extent to which the Cartesian autonomous 'I' cannot recognize its subjection to and determination by existing power relations, while at the same time its autonomy is a necessary prerequisite for an effective critique of existing social conditions. Following Laura Marcus's description of The Waves as a "Marxist novel that is not realist", and drawing on the critical potential inherent in the dialectics between identity-affirmation and identity-dissolution, this paper explores the multiple ways in which Woolf's radical challenge to the Cartesian 'I' can be interpreted as her striving toward a critical theory of post-individualist intersubjectivity. In particular, I shall demonstrate how Woolf's critique, rather than insisting on a general rejection of the fully individualized, autonomous self, focuses more specifically on the possibilities and limitations of transcending culturally-inscribed, ideologically-inflected and hence potentially self-alienating modes of individualization (determined by existing gendered, classed, social, and institutional discourses and their concomitant value systems) as represented by each one of her seven 'non-characters'.

22 On the Ambiguity of the Subject (KÄTE MEYER-DRAWE, Pädagogik, Bochum)

This presentation focuses on the particular form of subjectivity that has evolved in the modern age. The subject has become a central figure in the constitution of meaning. It shapes the meaning of itself, its world, and of the others. Because of that the subject's ambiguity has fallen into oblivion. This ambiguity consists in the fact that, on the one hand, the subject is subjected to the definitions of other people, its own self-understanding, and the influences of the things around him, whereas on the other hand the selfsame subject also renders the basis of all this. Hence the word 'subject' must not be taken as a timeless ontological characterization but as a specific self-interpretation of human beings which is produced in practices of submission and liberation. Foucault used occasionally the expression "Technologies of the Self" to ward off that type of subjectivity which is merely to represent a flawless unity. An adequate understanding of subjectivity has to describe minutely how subjects take shape in specific social and historical contexts via articulating their very ambiguity. Problems arise if this ambiguity is reduced to either side, i.e. the subject as autonomous sovereign or as passive victim. The prototype of this ambiguity is our corporality which condemns us to lead our lives in the sense of Plessner. According to him we must respond to the double aspect of our existence, namely to the fact that we have our body and that we are our body. Hence the self-centered and triumphant subject is not contrasted with a completely dispersed one, but the idea of the subject as a massive unity is set off against the concept of a subject as a fragile difference which is burdened with the risk of contingency as well as open for a multiplicity of possible configurations.

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23 Modulations of Subjectivity as 'Voice' in American Poetry (CRISTANNE MILLER, English and American Literature, Claremont)

U.S. lyric poetry has long been associated with expressions of selfhood, a critical history traced from Whitman's "Song of Myself" and Dickinson's numerous poems of the "I". In contrast, I understand theirs as a poetics of the unified expressive subjectivity: subjective incoherence, fluidity, and fragmentation was key to their poetics and is now again central to innovative U.S. poetry. Such contemporary poetry rejects "voice" as the basis for the lyric poem, thereby also rejecting a unified expressive subjectivity and coherent identifiable speaker.

Looking especially at Myung Mi Kim's 'Under Flag' (1991) and 'Dura' (1999), I will explore what happens to the lyric poem when coherent subjectivity or "voice" disappears as the primary organizing feature. What kind of subject and subjectivity replace "the speaker" in highly elliptical, syntactically disrupted, non-narrative and non-voice-based poetry? How does a de-construction of voice transform the genre of the lyric poem? I will also briefly trace how such deconstruction has been written into the lyric poem in the U.S. since Whitman and Dickinson.

24 Nathalie Sarraute or the Constitution of the Subject in the Age of Mistrust (PATRICIA OSTER, Komparatistik, Tübingen)

Nothing seems to fit Sartre's conception of the subject less than the nouveau roman and its mistrust of the subject. In fact, not just the earliest examples of the nouveau roman were influenced by Sartre, but particularly the latest - after his crisis concerning the shift to the problems surrounding the autobiographical subject - can also be seen as moving closer to Sartre's conception of the subject. The novels of Nathalie Sarraute can be considered as having particular significance within this context, insofar as her first novel even appeared in Temps Modernes and was launched by Sartre in a much-quoted preface. In her work, Nathalie Sarraute consistently tries to find new ways of showing inauthenticity and self-alienation. She looks for modern consciousness behind its façade in order to follow its trail through unconscious impulses of the psyche and through semiconscious mechanisms of repression and thought patterns. Using tropisms compressed into the sub-conversation, she creates a new medium of representation and a new language that contrast with the conventional stylistic media of interior monologue and free indirect discourse. Her work has its own interior logic in its development. Her early works still possess the objectivity of a narration that tries to avoid clichés and lieux communs ("common grounds"), but this becomes more and more a part of the background until finally in her last novels the first person narrator becomes just a showplace for a multiplicity of voices responding to the dynamics of every irritation. The lieu commun appears here as a part of a subject that is disintegrating in a multitude of first person narrators, yet is still trying to reflect its constitution in its brokenness and contradiction. When referring to Tu ne t'aimes pas (1989, trans. You Don't Love Yourself 1990), which plays a central role in this investigation, one can refer to a 'realistic-existentialist' theory of the subject. It concerns the heroic effort to come to terms with the contestability of a subject that turns out to neither be absolute, nor disappear in a maelstrom of anonymity. In the constant change of approach she creates movement that projects the tissue of the text, comparable to Giacometti's portraits which approach the subject without objectifying it into a solid form.

25 The Subject in the Works of Robert Musil (HANS-GEORG POTT, Germanistik, Düsseldorf)

Uncovering the illusion of the autonomous self by means of the influences of Freud and the events of the First World War was not the only thing Robert Musil accomplished. He also succeeded in describing man as a subject, "the entire person, separated from his environment by means of the
civil code", as a functional system not seeking to justify itself or anything else. With this, he anticipates Luhmann's system theory's description concerning the "treachery of the subject". But there still remain irresolvable, inexplicable remnants. The subject does indeed lose the highest position, but 'humankind' does not disappear as a result. One must, with the help of Musil, determine what humankind is, in other words, how humanity must observe and describe itself.

26 Autonomous and Seduced Subject (KURT RÖTTGERS, Philosophie, Hagen)

1. If we were still living in the 20th century, i.e. at the end of modern culture, determining the relationship between the autonomous subject and its seduction would be easy. This is because autonomy means unseductability. The devil or women (or men) would have no effect on the autonomous subject. Anything else would be heteronomy through which the subject as such would be put at risk. But this modern subject must also be a universal one: its self-realization is the realization of the universal, of reason. The so-called trap of globalization is the trap into which the subject's claim to reason sought to maneuver the subject. The other trap is the impossibility of alterity; due to the growing generality of the autonomous subject through self-determination and the growing tendency of consensus to become the clear goal of communication, communication became more temporary and therefore superfluous and the so-called problem of intersubjectivity became even more difficult to resolve.

2. Fortunately or unfortunately we are no longer living in the Modern period. In my opinion, Postmodernism is characterized by the loss of the autonomous subject. The autonomous subject has been corroded from both the inside and the outside. But if one wants find a way of identifying Postmodernism apart from its corroded subject, and instead find a positive reading, then this alternative reading, the actual topic of this talk, will be found in the concept of the seduced subject. This assumes that it will once again be possible to interpret seduction positively. An important idea is that a positive interpretation will have to argue that through seduction, unlike through autonomy, one can regain one's sense of alterity (self-determination through difference).

3. How should we view the loss of the autonomous subject? Since the beginning of the 20th century, self-preservation, self-assertion and similarly difficult ideas have been cast into doubt through the question of their continued survival without having to be a victor on the one hand, and on the other hand through the psychoanalytic insight that this self is not even the master in its own home. Dedication to non-self, without which the self could not survive, but even more the awareness that self and non-self are just positions in a weblike game in which the self is the position that has the ball or whose turn it is to speak, and the non-self is the position which is being played to, but understandably can be no longer conceived as substance or as something defined by substance, allow us to declare the loss of the autonomous subject. Like every loss, this one is both pleasure and pain. We can and must mourn it and we can and may consider it a relief.

4. If we want to describe the mode of loss in which the modern subject is present in Postmodernism, i.e. the individual traces of its absence, in all their particularities, the idea of the seduced subject seems to be the appropriate one. This kind of seduction is not a powerful attack on a defenseless non-self, wicked because it violates the right of freedom (as in criminal law and Freud). But it is also not the reversal of this relationship by the right of the non-self's countenance (Lévinas), but rather it is every vacillation of the reciprocal seduction and the desire to be seduced that have been established by all the more demanding theories of seduction (Kierkegaard, Simmel, Baudrillard, Camartin). Due to the fact that such
phenomena are not just casual occurrences, such as the case in seduction (and auto-
seduction), by the impression that one has been seduced, one sees that the seduced subject is
a purely superficial phenomenon; a suggestion of profoundness in its case is nothing but an
optical illusion.

27 Aspects of the Humanities in Natural Science Research: Critical
Commentary on an Evolutionary Biological Explanation of Subjectivity
(ARBOGAST SCHMITT, Klassische Philologie, Marburg)

On the one hand the theory of evolution is based on overwhelming factual evidence, which is
supported by thoroughly scrutinized observations attested to by experimentation. But on the other
hand, things look completely different when it comes to the interpretation of the observed facts,
both with respect to the causes and the possible directions and goals of the evolutionary
developments as well as with respect to the conceptual definition in clear terms of the resulting
states. In contrast to the use of the latest and most effective research methods there is an astonishing
constancy in using once found patterns of interpretation, which moreover come mostly from the
history of ideas rather than from a specific scientific background. Some of these categories of
interpretation go back even beyond Plato and Aristotle to Democritus, e.g. when from Darwin to
(e.g.) Edward O. Wilson the decisive factors of evolution have been derived from the confrontation
of accidental mutations and environmental demands, i.e. from the confrontation of contingency and
necessity.

These thoughts have been passed on to modern times primarily through an intensive reception of
Epicureanism from the 16th to the 19th century. Interwoven with typically neo-stoic positions, e.g.
the theory of the instinct of self-preservation, which all organisms have in common and which is
controlled by the genes, these thoughts constitute the basis from which Darwin tried to understand
his new results. The inherent contradictions which result from intermingling these philosophical
systems characterize the approach of the theory of evolution up to this day. What applies to the
theory of evolution in general applies in particular to the explanation of subjectivity given by
evolutionary biology. Almost without exception, the key to explaining the emergence of subjectivity
has been searched for in observing the development of consciousness and self-consciousness. Even
the modern theories of consciousness contain a substantial legacy from the Hellenistic philosophies.
In particular the main differentiation of mental processes or states, the division into passive
stimulus-information and its conscious analysis with the resulting oppositions of the conscious and
the unconscious, the rational and the irrational, reason and emotion, thinking and sensation goes
back to the reception of the Hellenistic philosophies in early modern times.

These distinctions have supplied even the so-called standard version of brain research with the
patterns through which scientists have tried to differentiate and localize the different control
systems in the brain. In spite of having proof for the plasticity and the polyvalence of the different
kinds of brain tissue even the latest brain research retains the old distinctions (assuming for example
that the emotions are placed in the so-called limbic system, the rational functions in the cortex), the
only difference being that the whole is regarded as a permanently interacting system.

The correctness, however, of differentiating the passive reception of stimuli and the active
mental analysis is nowadays criticized from various sides: physiological, psychological as well as
philosophical. Therefore it is worthwhile to return to an approach which does not use consciousness
but the human ability of discernment to explain subjectivity, an approach that was characteristic of
ancient and medieval Platonism and Aristotelianism for almost 2000 years in the European history
of ideas.

The manifold and mutual interconnection of mental acts as assumed by the philosophy of
perception provides an interesting model which can help to understand the results of modern brain research much better than the sharp division into rational, emotional and voluntary systems provided by the philosophies of consciousness. At the same time it may become clear that the tissue suitable for polyvalent functions due to its plasticity cannot have the uniform alignment of its network activities into a special function in itself, but needs a stimulus from outside coming from the subject's perception. The attempt to explain the reasons and the consequences of giving the subject's mental activity taking precedence over the material execution of this activity will constitute the final part of this lecture.

28 Subject and Language (MONIKA SCHMITZ-EMANS, Komparatistik, Bochum)

The speech theorists of the 18th and 19th centuries rediscovered language as transcendental a priori knowledge. Since Hamann, Herder and Humboldt, the discourse about the subject has become a discourse about the subject of speech, where Hamann pointedly expresses the tension between individuality and that which is capable of being communicated by speech. The taking apart of the subject by Nietzsche and his followers is correspondingly formulated as a speech-theoretical argumentation. Up until the present this has determined both positive and negative discoveries about the subject. Literary and theoretical discourse has been significantly affected by this since the end of the 18th century. It was not by chance that Foucault formulates his position on the critique of the subject as a diagnosis of the death of the author. Using this as a basis, I will present a sampling of recent theoretical ideas on production and text surrounding the idea of the writer and his subject role. I will place emphasis on three points: firstly the function and relevance of the topos of inspiration in modern poetics (particularly in the work of Octavio Paz), secondly the attempted rescue of the subject from its harshest critics by means of the 'style' category (mainly in the work of Manfred Frank), and thirdly the description of poetic speech using the category of 'rhythm' insofar as it uses a subject of poetic speech (cf. Henri Meschonnic) as a basis for argumentation.

29 Critique of the Subject and Society in Adorno's Minima Moralia (ULRICH SCHULZ-BUSCHHAUS, Romanistik, Graz)

Adorno shares with later philosophers and cultural analysts the view of the difficulties the subject meets within a modern society organized along functional differentiations. But he is far from renouncing the categories of subject and subjectivity. One could even raise the paradox that to him the empirical weakness of the subject (with the evident danger of a complete loss) means a theoretical strengthening of its conception. So he seeks to transform the social crisis of the subject into one of the main arguments for a critique of capitalist modernity, in this case the modernity of United States in the Thirties and early Forties of the 19th century.

30 The Non-Subjective Language of the Subject in the Aesthetic Experience. Reflections on the Concept of Nature in Adorno's Ästhetische Theorie (RALF SIMON, Germanistik, Basel)

My presentation seeks to prove the hypothesis that Adorno's argumentation in his Ästhetische Theorie (Aesthetic Theory) is not just constellatory. The concept of nature functions as a systematic center from which the basic conceptual net of the aesthetic theory unfolds. Initially there is a bifurcation: the differentiation between the naturally beautiful and the sublime (as a category of the aesthetics of natural phenomena). The sublime, in its aesthetic of non-identity and of the rupture, is raised to a the level of a matrix of modern art. At the same time the emphasis on the naturally beautiful is puzzling. Adorno develops the concepts of form/harmony/logicality, puzzle, aesthetic
appearance, expression/mimesis, apparition/ shudder/etc., context of meaning, and spirit among others, constantly referring back to the concept of the naturally beautiful. Obviously he is trying to assign a moment of sudden and passing revelation of identity to the aesthetic structure of sublime non-identity, and he can derive this moment only from a concept of nature that is perhaps even theological. If art is considered a counter-concept to the context of societal alienation, then it must show incorruptibility - at least for a short moment - in order to identify itself as this otherness. Therefore Adorno oddly enough follows the traces of natural beauty within the context of the concept of sublimity in order to let the natural beauty show forth from works of art. This entire argumentation at first seems to be quite far from a theory of the subject. A second point of articulation is constructed across from the concrete language of subjectivity when the naturally beautiful engulfed in the sublime comes into play as something 'similar to language', as a second non-signifying language. This point 'expresses' a qualitatively different language. How must we conceptualize the interplay between these two languages? How can a (natural) language find expression in the human endeavor of art so that it creates an almost utopian counterpart to the subject? The discussion of this question can take several directions, perhaps even without having to take one of the following options. First of all there is the question of whether the natural part of a revelatory language is created constellatorily in art (as its effect), or whether it articulates itself through art as its own ontical extent. It is also possible that it is created in art in the first place, but then interpreted as something that goes 'deeper' than art (the willing and strategic transformation of constructivism into theology). We must also ask which function this envisaged level of non-subjective theory of the subject serves in an argumentative context in which subjectivity appears to hardly differ from that which is principally corrupt. Aesthetics, which, according to the prelude in the Aesthetic Theory, takes over the role of art or even of speculation (metaphysics) after its end, portrays itself as a theoretical project of compensation which, in a strange turn, usurps the source which is its double. If aesthetic theory remains as the only space for speech that ventilates the traditional categories of meaning, then it too will become a space for the subject. Will this non-subjective second language follow this path to the center of Adorno's theory of the subject, which comes as an aesthetic theory to this space where subjectivity can be topicalized as something other than non-circular?

31 Cultural Remembrance: Thomas Mann’s Confrontation with German Identity (FRANCESCA SPADINI, Germanistica, Florenz)

The question of cultural identity has again become a current issue in the last few years. This is particularly true in Germany, where the historic events of the last decade have led many to readdress this problem which has existed for much longer. Very few modern writers have occupied themselves with this question as intensively as Thomas Mann, whose complete work can be interpreted as a series of variations on the theme of ‘German identity’. The way in which Mann deals with Germany's cultural identity gives us an opportunity to examine his historical reflections through the lens of that culture-theoretical approach that Jan Assmann has recently developed in his much-acclaimed work Das kulturelle Gedächtnis (The Cultural Memory). Departing from Thomas Mann's description of individual historical personalities, in which the destinies of collective and individual identity overlap one another, I would like to show in my presentation to what degree Mann bases his (re)construction of 'German identity' on a 'connective structure' (J. Assmann), intrinsically characterized by the devices of repetition, the perspective of past reflection, and autopoiesis.
32 *The Subject of the Other: From Alterity to Heterology* (RICHARD TERDIMAN, History of Consciousness, Santa Cruz)

This paper seeks to examine the problems and prospects of re-conceiving the notion of "subject" in the face of a powerful critique, over the past few decades, based upon work in multicultural, postcolonial, and gender-sensitive critical modes. This work has laid the bases for a revision or replacement of monological, ethnocentric, individualistic notions of subjectivity. The legacy of Rousseauian middle-class individualism has thus been contested by a series of thinkers who conceive of the subject as a collective, relational entity. What then can we say about "subjects"? And who are we as we seek to do so?

33 *Transgression and Ascesis in 20th Century Spanish-American Poetry: Two Competing Versions of the Subject in Octavio Paz and José Lezama Lima* (BERNHARD TEUBER, Romanistik, Kiel)

A glance at the list of Latin American authors that have won the Nobel Prize is an impressive indicator that despite Europe's and North America's love of Spanish-American novels, Spanish-American poetry can hardly be considered to have less importance to the world in terms of its production and reception. The presentation will compare the works of the Cuban José Lezama Lima (1912-1976) and the Mexican Octavio Paz (1914-1998) as two exemplary positions in Spanish-American poetry. Both authors come from the European tradition as well, but both come to terms with this legacy in such different ways that they arrive at different models of the literary subject. In the case of Octavio Paz, one can see his somewhat affirmative reception of surrealism in his poetic writing. His texts correspondingly show a model of subjectivity that defines itself in terms of transgression against the law. Poetry becomes the preferred location for the subject to articulate its transgressive nature. Lezama Lima also uses the transgressive phantasms of the surrealists, but his subject theory reaches further back towards Nietzsche, among others. This is the path that Lezama takes to arrive at his model of a "sujeto metafórico" which is characterized by imagination, metaphor/allegory and, notably, by ascesis. Borrowing terms from a late Foucauldian critical theory of the subject, one can then speak of an ascetic subject which yields to the semiotic movement of the text without losing itself within the text.

34 *Phantoms and Resurrection: the French Novel of the Nineties* (PASCAL TORRIN, Lettres Modernes, Clermont-Ferrand)

My presentation starts with a (para-Freudian) re-reading of the myth of Oedipus and with the question of the transmission of the unconscious. I will continue with a reflection on the question of 'real presence' and the dogma of the Assumption and their application to the literary domain. Finally, using examples takes from texts from the Nineties, from which I will try to extract the 'alchemical' genesis and scope as well as a 'conjuration' of the tragedy constituted by the effects of original sin, for the writers of today, the attitude of the French between 1936 and 1962 and the silence that weighed on this attitude must be known.

35 *Poetische Epistemologie - Mallarmés Ausgang aus dem Tunnel der Kontingenz* (WINFRIED WEHLE, Romanistik, Eichstätt)

[only in German]
The Constitution of Identity through the Experience of Space in English Modernist Narrative Literature (NATASCHA WÜRZBACH, Anglistik, Köln)

The history of subject conceptions has shown that a one-sided emphasis on rationality as guarantor of supposed autonomy, and the neglect of emotion and instinctual urges, have substantially contributed to a radical restriction of the subject and finally, from a postmodern viewpoint, to its disappearance. The constitution of value and meaning is at the same time just as radically called into question. Suggested solutions to this cultural situation, which is increasingly seen as a dilemma, comprise the replacing of dichotomous thought schemata and normative thinking with more flexible models, the extending of the subject concept beyond the rational component, and a hermeneutically flexible understanding of discourse (M. Frank 1988, P. Geyer 1997, P. Burger 1998). In addition, recent gender studies have been reconsidering the question of the inseparableness of the physical dimension.

In classical Modernism between the turn of the century and the Second World War, an epoch when truth and values were becoming less absolute, a promising crisis of the subject was already developing. In narrative literature this crisis led to subject blueprints caught in the tension between fragmentation and the search for an (unconscious) core of being. These individually diverse blueprints are not only of interest for historical reasons, but also provide paradigms for the present discussion.

The thematicization of subjectivity in the narrative texts is above all aimed at a self-authentication of individuality and identity, in a personal and private subject area of conscious processes rather than in a communicative and interactive action area. In true Romantic tradition these subject blueprints are characterized by a total experience, encompassing reflection, emotion and physicality. Meaning and values are conferred primarily by the subject, often at a critical distance from social norms and constraints.

I shall be focusing on the particularly difficult area of the formation and stabilization of identity. Identity can be understood as the deictic concretization of the subject, comprising both situative self-authentication (as a minimal condition, see M. Frank 1988) and the experience of continuity, i.e. the identity of the self in the space-time continuum. In Modernist novels and short stories, the protagonists' experience of self frequently appears bound up with both situative space experience and the consideration of long-term spatial surroundings. As a result, multisensory perception, including bodily senses (smell, touch, also hearing), often takes on particular significance. Sensory perception of this kind goes back to that experience of the physical which, from a psychoanalytical viewpoint, plays a decisive role in the formation of the child's early identity (Freud, Lacan) and continues to be an essential component in the further experience of identity, as is confirmed by psychosomatic and neurological considerations (Elizabeth Grosz 1994).

In the sensory experience of space of Modernist narrative figures, a subject is articulated that, while not antirational, is certainly oriented towards feeling and instinct. It does not become drawn into aestheticism, hedonism and value-neutrality, however, showing itself capable of independent constitution of meaning. The fictional subject, virtually celebrating its individuality and basing its identity on its capacity for experience, is far removed from any kind of rationally based autonomy. It is flexibly and dynamically conceived, occasionally even daring to lose itself in epiphany, removing itself from teleological development schemata and normative value judgment. The action structure of the narrative texts is correspondingly episodic. The subject's professed state of precariousness also enables the boundaries between the sexes to be extended, providing new possibilities for the female subject blueprints in particular. Here also, literature proves a powerful cultural vehicle for experiment.
It is a topos in Proust studies that the narrator of A la recherche du temps perdu (Remembrance of Things Past) not only is drawn into a poetological crisis of narration, but also gets caught in an epistemological crisis concerning his ability to perceive his own self. From a philosophical point of view, the narrator clearly tries to discover the subject holistically. The narrator believes his success in this discovery is tied to the temporal continuum of his own experience and perception and sees failure to do this as a problem of memory. The truth of existence is to be found in the individual's past, which opens itself only partially to the consciousness of the reflecting first person in the Recherche. Another topos of Proust studies claims that this lack of a complete discovery of self is finally resolved in the perception of "mémoire involontaire" ("involuntary memory"), which suddenly allows the past self to join the present self in a continuum by means of a sensory impression, closing the gaps the voluntary memory is unable to gain control of. Finally there is a third topos of Proust studies that states that the perception of "mémoire involontaire" not only leads the narrator out of the crisis of narration and becomes the contents of his novel, but also this perception allows him to discover his 'true self' beyond his corporeal existence. It is in this way that the value of the discovery of "mémoire involontaire" is placed into an idealistic perspective, which causes the search for lost time to become the search for a metaphysical reason for living within which the first person as a single unit feels secure. In contrast to this view, this presentation will show that the Recherche again and again refuses to accept such an idealistic reconstruction of the subject and essentially reduces the ontology of self to the status of a corporeal perceptual reality as well. The subject is constituted by means of the corporeality of sensory perception and through the text's body of signs. It is, after all, not the metaphysical experience, but rather the phenomenology of aesthetics that allows Proust's first person narrator to escape the epistemological crises of perception of self.