

## INNOCENT VISION, PURE FOUNDATIONS: STANDPOINT FEMINISM

Liz Philipose  
York University, Canada

The absence of God, *Geist*, History and Reason as guarantors of knowledge has generated a terrain of competing and conflicting claims to the legitimate foundations for knowing. The "crisis of reason" in the social sciences has raised doubts about the efficacy and certainty of conventional criteria of knowledge production, including: traditional methods and procedures of knowing; disciplinary configurations and boundaries which determine relevance; criteria to test validity, such as verifiability and falsifiability; and the notion of objectivity as a necessary or possible feature of knowledge production<sup>1</sup> (Grosz, 1993, pp. 189-193). In doing so, fundamental assumptions of modern conventional knowledges -- the separation of subject from object and the claim to universality -- have been challenged, to the extent that these assumptions cannot be articulated unproblematically.

With the crisis of reason comes the instability of feminist claims to know. While feminism has largely been a series of oppositional moves directed against conventional science, feminism is also implicated in conventional epistemological discourses. Since feminist theorising is made possible by conventional ways of knowing and because feminists are not transcendent but historically and socially bound, feminist theory emanates from the traditions of social science. In fact, as Elizabeth Grosz claims, it is the very immersion of feminism in patriarchal practices which lends to the critical effectiveness of feminism (Grosz, 1993; Grosz, 1990; Grosz, 1986). At the same time, because of their implication in and dependence on conventional ways of knowing, feminist knowledge suffers from the doubt generated by the crisis of reason. Doubt about the grounds for making feminist

claims to know translates into doubt about claims to feminist identity, ethics, and politics, as these claims are generated by and through epistemological commitments. In these ways, the crisis of reason is simultaneously a crisis of feminism.

At the same time, the absence of external and transcendent guarantees of knowledge has made possible the search for alternative foundations and justifications for feminist claims to know. "Standpoint feminism" is one set of responses to the anxiety which accompanies the loss of traditional grounds from which to speak and is seen as an effective and necessary justificatory strategy for feminist knowledges. For Sandra Harding and Grosz, the conditions which allow for feminist knowledges to be articulated are the same conditions which make the project of re-grounding or re-situating feminist knowledges necessary. For Harding, justificatory strategies for making claims to know are necessary for feminists to realize the "emancipatory possibilities" of the "harnessing of power to knowledge" (Harding, 1990, p.83), and to be effective, accountable, and transformative agents of male-dominated science (Harding, 1990). Grosz argues that the crisis of reason "consists in the impossibility of rationally deciding between competing methods and paradigms produced from different positions" (Grosz, 1993, p.194). Without overarching criteria to judge valid knowledge, adjudicating between competing claims is impossible and paradigms can only be justified according to their internal evaluative measures. For Grosz, this constitutes a lapse into relativism and an avowal that all positions are equally valid. If all positions are equally valid, there is no possibility for adopting an oppositional stance or issuing challenges for transformation, thus the dissolution into relativism disavows the possibilities for politics. (Grosz, 1993, p.194). Leaving behind notions of external and transcendent guarantees of knowledge, standpoint feminism looks to "experience," "being" and "location" as the new replacement grounds to justify and guarantee knowledges and the foundations which defer a

lapse into relativism.

The search for alternative epistemological guarantees from experience, being and location has also marked attempts to make claims from "difference"; that is, critiques of feminism's exclusions have been accompanied by correctives very often in the form of identity claims. Racialized women have been among the most effective in asserting their claims to legitimate vision derived from their "view from below," their experience of multiple oppression which come from living in mainstream racist and sexist society and compounded by the racism replicated by mainstream feminism.<sup>2</sup> Understood as a version of standpoint feminism, the epistemological claims of racialized women is another attempt to establish legitimate foundations on which to authorize knowledge, identity, ethics and politics, the very grounds of being.

The project of developing standpoint justifications is a contradictory one. At the same time that feminist knowledges suffer from the decline of traditional guarantors, because feminists have consistently challenged conventional knowledges they contribute to the crisis of reason and the concomitant explosion of competing claims to knowledge. By arguing that conventional science is male-biased, they have challenged claims to objectivity. In doing so, they have allowed for the recognition that knowledge is perspectival; socially, historically, and politically constituted and situated; and that it is not neutral, unbiased, or infallible.<sup>3</sup> The contradictory aspect of standpoint feminism is the aim of replacing traditional foundations with "objectivity redefined" and feminist foundations for knowing, what Wendy Brown calls "reactionary foundationalism," which in many ways replicates the power and domination of traditional knowledges rather than repudiating the domination of moral claims to know (Brown, 1991, pp.67-68).<sup>4</sup> Investigating the problem of authority in feminist discourse and the implications for feminist politics, Kristie McClure asks the questions: "what is it that authorizes the discourse of a feminist?" and how is it that answers to this question participate in the general problem of authorizing any knowledge

(McClure, 1992, p.344-45)? Joan Scott responds with her own question, asking how it is possible "to authorize the new knowledge if the possibility of all historical objectivity has been questioned?" (Scott, 1992, p.30). In other words, if part of the feminist project has been to undermine objectivity and (male) claims to firm epistemological grounds for knowing, the standpoint approach of re-asserting solid (female) grounds is problematic to the extent that the need for epistemological guarantees emanates from the discourses of male-biased sciences themselves. That is to say, the gendered elements of conventional science cannot be separated from its claims to know. The criticism here is not to accuse feminists of replicating patriarchal strategies but to point to the power, domination and exclusions which allow for claims to know from solid epistemological terrain. As Teresa de Lauretis has argued, the strand of feminism with which standpoint is affiliated, one that has taken a polarized, oppositional and counter-hegemonic approach, has remained and been "recontained within the boundaries of hegemonic cultural discourses. Cast as they [are] in the terms of liberal pluralism, socialist humanism, and aesthetic modernism, they [remain] un-self-consciously complicit in their racism, colonialism and heterosexism" (de Lauretis, 1990, p.132). Adding to de Lauretis' list of hegemonic cultural discourses, standpoint feminism remains within the boundaries of conventional epistemologies.

The crisis of reason affords several options: one is to reassert oppositional foundations for knowing as advocates of standpoint feminism attempt; the other is to "interrogate what the theoretical move that establishes foundations authorizes, and what precisely it excludes or forecloses" (Butler, 1992, p.7); that is, the options are available to consider the ways in which foundations become foundational, thus rendering the grounds from which one speaks always contingent. Reasserting solid epistemological terrain allows for only certain types of politics, those which are contained within moral parameters of right and wrong. Problematizing foundations

allows for the acknowledgement of a "politics of location" and as yet unrealized versions of political and theoretical life. As Brown states:

Surrendering epistemological foundations means giving up the ground of specifically moral claims against domination -- the avenging of strength through moral critique of it -- and moving instead into the domain of the sheerly political: 'wars of position' and amoral contests about the just and the good in which truth is always grasped as coterminous with power, as 'already power', as the voice of power (Brown, 1991, p.75; paraphrasing Foucault, 1980, p.133).

Judith Butler and Brown are similar to the extent that they focus on the discursive conditions of foundationalism, and they agree that the "subject," a "position", or a "standpoint" are not necessarily central and prior to the conduct of politics. Whereas Brown advocates the surrender of foundations in favour of "amoral contests," Butler is less committed to the need for and the possibilities of surrender. For Butler, an antifoundational position is implicated in a foundationalist discourse; that is, both positions are rendered unquestioned and unquestionable within a theory (Butler, 1992, p.7). Butler's project is to account for the function of foundations as authorizing grounds and as "constituted through exclusions which, taken into account, expose the foundational premise as a contingent and contestable presumption" (Butler, 1992, p.7).<sup>5</sup> The criticisms of standpoint feminism offered in this article are not from an antifoundationalist approach, but following Butler, an attempt to point to the contingency of the standpoint foundations described by Nancy Hartsock, Sandra Harding, and Donna Haraway.

Some feminist standpoint theorists claim that women (as the oppressed) or feminists (as theorists of oppression) are agents of higher knowledge and clearer vision. Women are accorded a privileged position in knowing reality because of their subordinate and op-

pressed status. Nancy Hartsock is probably the most quoted author on this approach to feminist epistemology. Hartsock draws on the Hegelian-Marxist master/slave dialectic to describe the utility of "the view from below" for feminist politics. She argues that because of the sexual division of labour, women are persistently in a subordinate position to men, excluded from dominant social structures and thus, less implicated in the dominant structures which perpetuate women's oppression. Because of the material conditions of women's lives, they have the ability to see real social relations in an unmystified and non-ideological (true) fashion. Just as Marx claimed that workers would not become agents until they became conscious of themselves as a class, Hartsock argues that the material position of women is not a guarantee that they will necessarily recognize the conditions of their oppression. For women to become knowing agents, that is, to have "the ability to go beneath the surface of appearances to reveal the real but concealed social relations requires both theoretical and political activity," (Hartsock, 1984, p.175); that is, the reality of being women must be translated by and into a feminist standpoint.

Sandra Harding draws on Hartsock's position to argue that standpoint feminism is a useful justificatory strategy for legitimating feminist knowledge. Harding argues that women's exclusion from dominant social relations and marginalization within male structures offers certain advantages to feminist knowers. As "outsiders within", women are able to develop less biased and more inclusive knowledges; as marginalized actors, the position of women offers "the combination of nearness and remoteness, concern and indifference, that are central to maximizing objectivity" in scientific and social scientific research (Harding, 1991, p.124). For Harding, "the standpoint approaches enable one to appropriate and redefine objectivity" (Harding, 1991, p.134), not in terms of value-neutrality or transcendence, but in terms of socially located and historically informed vision. Objectivity redefined allows feminists to develop standards

of responsibility and relevance that defer relativism while maintaining enough distance from the objects of study to be recognized as justifiable scientific knowledge.

For both Hartsock and Harding, the view from below offers women a unique perspective on social relations and structures; it accords legitimacy to women's knowledge and the valid status to women knowers that are necessary to continue creating knowledges. The view from below for Hartsock, is one which is outside of dominating practices and thus one which is innocent and free from power. Hartsock seeks to define a position of purity, one that is untainted by pretensions to control and dominate through knowledge. Harding accepts this position as one which lends itself to objective science, as she does not question the pretensions to purity which Hartsock exhibits.<sup>6</sup>

Donna Haraway shares similarities with Hartsock and Harding, as she begins from Marxist assumptions to discuss "situated knowledges". As she states: "Marxist starting points offered tools to get to our versions of standpoint theories, insistent embodiment without disempowering positivisms and relativisms, and nuanced theories of mediation" (Haraway, 1991, p.186). For Haraway, the insights of radical social constructionism, that all knowledge is historically situated and contingent, should not direct feminists to deny the existence of meanings and materiality. Rather, feminists must insist on better accounts of the world and aim to construct successor sciences which avoid the "god-tricks" of both objectivity and relativism.<sup>7</sup> The problem is that in order to attain their political goals, feminists

have to have simultaneously an account of radical contingency for all knowledge claims and knowing subjects, a critical practice for recognizing our own 'semiotic technologies' for making meanings, and a no nonsense commitment to faithful accounts of a 'real' world (Haraway, 1991, p.187).

Haraway attempts to redefine objectivity in feminist

terms, as "situated knowledges." She begins from the presumption that feminist critiques of male science have demonstrated that scientific perspectives are embodied and engendered,<sup>8</sup> so that claims to objectivity by male science have always been made from partial perspectives. The transition to feminist objectivity is to add the self-awareness of partiality to the term "objectivity" to be accountable for the knowledge generated, and to be explicit about the political goals of feminism.

Haraway's particular problem is one of translation. She does not assume that the view from below is innocent, insofar as she claims that knowers as well as objects known are socially and politically constructed. Rather than make claims to purity of vision, she prefers the subjugated knowledges because "they promise adequate, sustained, objective, transforming accounts" of the "real" world (Haraway, 1991, p.191). Location is the starting point; that is, subjugated being is a place to begin, but in and of itself does not guarantee better knowledge: "subjugation is not grounds for an ontology: it might be a visual clue....(but) there is no immediate vision from the standpoints of the subjugated" (Haraway, 1991, p.193). Translation comes from political engagement with the world, from recognition of one's situatedness, and the ability to see from the perspectives of others, "to see together without claiming to be another" (Haraway, 1991, p.193). For Haraway, the paradigm of science-as-usual contains the possibilities for re-inventing knowledge, and she argues that we need science for the "utopian and visionary" aims and the "passionate detachment" it offers (Haraway, 1991, p.192). The situatedness of scientific knowledge, previously denied, allows for agents of knowledge to adopt responsibility for the claims made. The aim is to find a larger vision than one offered by the view from nowhere, which is possible only by being "somewhere in particular" (Haraway, 1991, p.196). Acknowledging situatedness allows for

the joining of partial views and halting voices  
into a collective subject position that promises

a vision of the means of ongoing finite embodiment, or living within limits and contradictions, (ie) of views from somewhere (Haraway, 1991, p.196).

For Haraway, this is the science question in feminism.

Harding and Hartsock address the problem of translation, which is to say that they do not grant unmediated vision to the subjugated, but they stop short of raising questions about the ways in which "the subjugated" are appropriated as grounds for clearer vision. The standpoint of women, for Hartsock and Harding, is posited as prior to politics and theory rather than as both constituted by and constitutive of politics and theory. Hence, a certain innocence and purity is accorded to the vision from below; the subjugated are characterised as outside of power, and the project is for them to become self-conscious in order to take power vis-a-vis the creation of recognizable feminist knowledges.

Haraway attempts to problematize the presumption of purity, as she argues that the subjugated vision is not preferred for its innocence but for its lack of closure on critical and interpretive considerations of the production of knowledges, including the production of subjects of knowledge (Haraway, 1991, p.191). As she states:

here lies the serious danger of romanticizing and/or appropriating the vision of the less powerful while claiming to see from their positions. To see from below is neither easily learned nor unproblematic, even if 'we' naturally inhabit the great underground terrain of subjugated knowledges. The positionings of the subjugated are not exempt from critical re-examination, decoding, deconstruction, and interpretation; that is, from the semiological and hermeneutic modes of critical enquiry (Haraway, 1991, p.191).

While Haraway pays more attention to the discursive production of knowers and knowledges than Hartsock

and Harding, she too stops short of problematizing the ways in which foundations become foundational. A shared concern of these theorists is with the need to avoid relativism and to posit objectivity as the "view from somewhere." Relativism itself is a problem generated by discourses of objectivity which presume a stable reality which can be known outside of contingent social meanings. Further, in outlining the dangers of relativism, these theorists make the claim to be firmly situated on solid epistemological grounds which accords them a broad perspective and overarching criteria from which to judge.

It seems to be the case, however, that their own variations on the logic of historical materialism pre-empt their relativist/objective dichotomy. Hartsock, Harding and Haraway accept the social and historical constitution of knowledge, and Haraway, of knowers. And yet it is Haraway that distinguishes between social constructionism and "the radical social constructionist programme" that creates the "the problem of metaphor,...the problem of the relation of bodies and language" (Haraway, 1991, p.185). The concern about "radical social constructionism" -- social constructionism gone too far -- is summed up rather crudely by Mary Hawkesworth: "there are some things that can be known" (Hawkesworth, 1990, p.147).<sup>9</sup> Hawkesworth articulates an assumption which is implicit in the discussions by Haraway, Hartsock and Harding. That is, the fact that some things can be known (Hawkesworth's example is rape), is taken to be the opposite position to "all things are historically, socially, and discursively constituted, thus always contingent." The crucial point that is missed by Hawkesworth is that "facts" are known only through interpretation and a range of political contests and historical processes that designate social meanings, notably so for Hawkesworth's example of rape. In limiting the extent to which they take social constructionism, these authors implicitly distinguish between "reality" (ontology) and knowing "reality" (epistemology), and in doing so, limit the extent to which they agree that thought and

reality are mutually constitutive.

Perhaps this is the result of reading conventional science as "male" science, thus generating the oppositional category of "female" or "feminist" science. Many feminist authors have persuasively and insightfully argued that science is gendered and reflects androcentric biases. The problem, however, is that the replacement project of standpoint approaches, of substituting male with feminist foundations, preempts an interrogation into the ways in which the need for foundations itself is generated by the very discourses that standpointers are attempting to challenge. If we accept that gender is central to the organization of knowledge production, it is problematic to distinguish between "male" and "foundations" as though they are part of separate discourses.

Crucially preempted by standpoint approaches are the ways in which "standpoints" become socially meaningful - the historical processes of social differentiation (Crosby, 1992, p.140). To speak as a "brown woman" for instance, and to legitimize my claims to know from the position of being less implicated in power, is to render my position beyond question. However, prior questions must be asked: What conditions make "brown" or "woman" socially meaningful characteristics? How are these categories produced and how is it that they function in particular discourses? Paraphrasing Scott, the position of "brown woman" "is at once already an interpretation and is in need of interpretation" (Scott, 1992, p.37). It is the possibility of understanding interpretive processes that is surrendered when standpoints are unproblematically adopted.

At stake in discussions of race and racism is the need to determine the processes that transform individuals with certain characteristics into socially meaningful and differentiated populations and to understand the ethical and political implications of bearing the marks of difference. To do this in some measure means that feminism become "feminist critical theory", that de Lauretis says "begins when the feminist critique of sociocultural formations... becomes conscious of itself and turns

inward....[and] does not merely expand or reconfigure previous discursive boundaries...but...represents and enacts a shift in historical consciousness" (de Lauretis, 1990, p.138). To enact a shift in historical consciousness means to risk the security of an epistemological home for the uncertainty of "a location of particularly intense contestation" where "the political" is an unsettled terrain" (McClure, 1992, p.343), a place where claims to know are displaced by contingent processes of knowing, "the domain of the sheerly political" (Brown, 1991, p.75). Beginning from the standpoint of "the subjugated" as the guarantee of knowledge limits the possibilities for questioning the ways in which "the subjugated" are constituted, "about the constructed nature of experience, about how one's vision is structured - about language (or discourse) and history" (Scott, 1992, p.25). Standpoint feminists raise these questions but their unwillingness to shift into the terrain of uncertainty by questioning the foundations from which they speak hypostatizes "the subjugated" and preempts an investigation into the function of foundations themselves.

## Notes

1. While it is generally accepted by scholarly and scientific communities that certain relatively recent events have cast doubt on the solidity of epistemological grounds, it can be said that knowledge has been suspect for some time. Scepticism is not a recent phenomenon of Western political thought. For instance, while Descartes claimed that consciousness guaranteed being, he needed faith in God to guarantee consciousness. Plato, in *The Republic* required the faith in the 'dialectic' to take people from objects (materiality) to the Forms (knowledge). If knowing was an unproblematic truth, there would be no need to argue for certainty or doubt, but the case is that guarantees of knowledge cannot go without saying. Grosz describes the anxiety of finding a guarantee of knowledge to which Descartes and Hume were responding as "a crisis of self validation and methodological self-

justification,...a crisis of reason's inability to rationally know itself" (Grosz, 1993, p.188).

The use of the word "crisis" implies a sudden rupture from comfortable knowing to disconcerting uncertainty, a new condition of human life. Since it is questionable whether anyone has ever sat on firm epistemological grounds, I accept Grosz's characterization, not to claim a new phenomenon, but to highlight a particular manifestation of scepticism relevant to feminist standpoint theories.

2. The literature on racialized women in feminism is vast. A number of articles have been definitional to some degree of the various debates, including: Amos and Parmar, 1984; Bhavnani and Coulson, 1986; Carby, 1982; Combahee River Collective, 1984; Hooks, 1986; Martin and Mohanty, 1986; Mohanty, 1988; and Moraga, 1986.

3. While it can be said that all feminisms are "subversive strategies," (Grosz, 1986), a sample of feminist critics who explicitly question "male-biased" (social) sciences include: Sandra Harding, Donna Haraway, Elizabeth Grosz, Susan Bordo, Judith Butler, Sneja Gunew, Ruth Bleier, Carol Gilligan, Evelyn Fox Keller, Hilary Rose, and Dorothy Smith. See the bibliography in Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism*, for the range of work in this area.

4. Brown says that "reactionary foundationalism" is "like identity politics,...both a symptom of and an act of resistance against the epistemological, political, and social terrain postmodernity forces us to inhabit...it presents itself as the indispensable threads preserving some indisputable good, eg., Western civilization, the American way of life, feminism, or Left politics". See Brown, 1991, p. 68.

5. Joan Scott offers a similar discussion on "experience":

Experience is not a word we can do without, although it is tempting, given its usage, to essentialize identity and reify the subject, to

abandon it altogether. But experience is so much a part of everyday language, so imbricated in our narratives that it seems futile to argue for its expulsion. It serves as a way of talking about what happened, of establishing difference and similarity, or claiming knowledge that is 'unassailable'. Given the ubiquity of the term, it seems to me more useful to work with it, to analyze its operations and to redefine its meaning. This entails focusing on processes of identity production, insisting on the discursive nature of 'experience' and on the politics of its construction (Scott, 1992, p.37).

6. Grosz points out that the requirement of purity emanates from conventional science and is the basis of common criticisms of feminist science:

It is not altogether surprising that underlying both criticisms, (feminists are self interested and biased; or they merely replicate male power games), is a common demand for a purity of position - an intellectual purity in the one case (untainted by social and political factors which militate against or interfere with the goals of scholarly research) and a political purity in the other (free from influence of patriarchal masculinist values) (Grosz, 1990, p.332).

7. Haraway describes the relationship between relativism and objectivity and the god-like qualities of both this way:

Relativism is a way of being nowhere while claiming to be everywhere equally. The 'equality' of positioning is a denial of responsibility and critical enquiry. Relativism is the perfect mirror twin of totalization in the ideologies of objectivity; both deny stakes in location, embodiment, and partial perspective; both make it impossible to see well. Relativism and totalization are both 'god-tricks' promising vision from everywhere and nowhere equally and fully, common myths in

rhetorics surrounding Science (Haraway, 1991, p.191).

8. Grosz is explicit in acknowledging the male body in the production and evaluation of knowledge. Her project is to submit the position of knower to scrutiny, and to address the explicit sexualization of knowledges, the relationship that models and goals of knowledges have to sexually specific (male) bodies....to draw out some of the effects that a concept of sexed corporeality may have on relations between knowers and objects known and on the forms, methods, and criteria of assessment governing knowledges today (Grosz, 1993, p.188).

9. The disingenuousness of Hawkesworth's analysis of what she terms "feminist postmodernism" cannot go without comment. The division of the chapter into "knowers" and "known" reifies the split between subject and object to which postmodern approaches are explicitly antithetical. Further, her question in the section "known", "whether feminist postmodernism constitutes an adequate epistemology for feminist theory" (Hawkesworth, 1990, p.145), misses the significance of projects which question the functions of epistemology, the ways in which epistemology serves to authorize, exclude, and dominate as sites of power. The "culprits" named by Hawkesworth, who reduce the world to text, thereby denying that anything exists (her conclusion), are Haydn White and John Buker. It is safe to say that in 1990, more appropriate examples of explicitly postmodern feminists were available for Hawkesworth's scrutiny -- Jane Flax, Susan Hekman, or Judith Butler, for instance. The few paragraphs that Hawkesworth devotes to her strategically myopic explanation of textuality leaves the reader with little to argue against. Her position, that theories of texts are dangerous, ("Should postmodernism's seductive text gain ascendancy, it will not be an accident that power remains in the hands of the white males who currently possess it"; Hawkesworth, 1990, p.148), is the stance of a moralist. Her facile treatment of selective authors and



her preemptory dismissal of the possibilities that there is more sophistication to theories of textuality offer shallow opportunities for others to engage her argument.

Rather than leave this criticism as an attack on poor scholarship, what deserves attention are the conditions which make such an inadequate treatment of feminist postmodernism acceptable. Certainly, the politics of publishing and mundane yet pervasive institutional requirements are relevant. More importantly, the approach that Hawkesworth adopts is one which could only exist in an academic climate that encourages a tenacious clinging to permanent positions and which demands less rigour from those on the wave of resistance to postmodern theory.

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## "THE REVOLUTION WILL NOT BE TELEVISED": MEDIA DEPOLITICIZATION OF THE MONTREAL AND HEBRON MASSACRES<sup>1</sup>

Andrew Biro

Black youth (holding up a picture of Martin Luther King, Jr.): "Thirty years later, we're still not free." White reporter: "That's not what this is all about."

-from CNN coverage of the  
1992 Los Angeles riots

All voting is a sort of gaming, like checkers or backgammon, with a slight moral tinge to it, a playing with right and wrong, with moral questions; and betting naturally accompanies it. The character of the voters is not staked. I cast my vote, perchance, as I think right; but I am not vitally concerned that that right should prevail.... When the majority shall at length vote for the abolition of slavery, it will be because they are indifferent to slavery, or because there is but little slavery left to be abolished by their vote.

-Henry David Thoreau,  
"Essay on Civil Disobedience"

Thoreau's observation was made in the United States over a hundred years ago, and yet his argument, that what we take to be the "political" realm consists, for most of us, of a means of diversion rather than a way of exercising control over collective life, seems, if anything, more true today. In 1966, then-governor of California Ronald Reagan stated that "Politics is just like show business" (qtd. in Postman 125) In 1980 he was elected President of the United States. In 1984, he was re-elected. In 1988, his chosen successor was elected, and there was even talk of repealing the Constitutional amendment that prevented him from seeking a third term in office. In spite of