PRAXIS IN THE TIME OF EMPIRE

Ananya Roy

Assistant Professor

Department of City and Regional Planning

University of California at Berkeley

Email: ananya@berkeley.edu

Phone: 510-642-4938

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Abstract

In the time of war and military occupation, it is possible for planning to articulate an ethics of disavowal and refusal. However, when empire involves much more than war, when empire also involves reconstruction, renewal, aid, and democracy, then it is much more difficult for planning to opt out of this liberal moral order. Situated at the heart of empire, i.e. in America, this paper explores some of these dilemmas of praxis and thereby the limits of liberalism. Drawing upon Marxist theory, cultural studies, and postcolonial critique, it makes a case for an ethics of "doubleness," one where benevolence can be recognized as Othering but also where complicity can be transformed into subversion.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The time of empire is war and destruction, but it is also creation, beauty, and renewal. The apparatus of empire is the military, but it is also architecture, planning, and humanitarian aid. The mandate of empire is to annihilate, but it is also to preserve, rebuild, and protect. Empire rules through coercion and violence, but it also rules through consent and culture. These paradoxes of empire, this unity of contradictions, poses some difficult dilemmas for the professions and disciplines that are entangled with imperial enterprises. If empire was simply destruction, then it would be relatively easy to formulate an ethics of disavowal. If empire was simply missile engagement, then it would be quite straightforward to articulate an ethics of refusal. But since empire also seeks to create, reconstruct, and do good, complicity with empire is difficult to avoid. This is the challenge of praxis in the time of empire.

In this paper, I conceptualize the time of empire as something more than the presentism of America's infinite war on terror. Following Gregory (2004), I see the "colonial present" not only as the initial moment of the colonial encounter, but also as the constant making of histories and geographies in the shadow of colonialism. In the context of planning, this means paying attention to the ways in which the field of action is structured by imperial practices. In other words, empire is not simply an unfortunate backdrop to planning, one that can be simply denied allegiance. Rather, empire is planning's "present history." It is an inaugural moment. It is a trace. It is a haunting. It is a seduction. The visibility, intensity, and immediacy of empire suggest and require an ethical stand on the matter of war, and this is important. But, I argue that the time of empire also presents the profound mandate to revisit some fundamental questions of praxis: first, the ways in which planning is embedded in a project of liberal democracy and how it operates through a frontier of renewal, improvement, and rebuilding; and second, how planning articulates a sense of responsibility and accountability in the ethical calculus of practice.

In such an analytical enterprise, I am aided by various strands of neo-Marxist theory that have long drawn attention to the political economy of planning, that have long debated the ethical autonomy of planning in the face of capitalistic ideology.

However, I also turn to postcolonial theory to move beyond what Spivak (1988) has termed the "sanctioned ignorance" of radical theorists: their silence on matters of race, colonialism, and empire. Gregory (2004: 7), invoking Huyssen, sees the last decades of the 20th century as a shifting of focus from "present futures to present pasts." He notes that postcolonialism is "part of this optical shift." Such an optical shift, this look toward "present pasts" is crucial for planning, a future-oriented enterprise. A postcolonial perspective recalibrates the temporal dimensions of planning's modernity. It also reconfigures the spatial dimensions of planning's enterprise. This paper, by drawing upon postcolonial theory, articulates a quite specific "politics of location" (Rich 1986). It is situated at the heart of empire, with an acute awareness that regimes of enunciation are also regimes of place and power, that to speak is to speak from a place on the map. It might seem parochial to restrict the speech of this paper to an American core, thereby silencing the vast and complex peripheries. My claim is not that American dilemmas are universal ones, but rather, as Harvey (2003: 211) has argued, that at this time of empire, America is a "real battleground." The heart of empire then is also what Jacobs (1996), following bell hooks, designates as a "profound edge" – the core at which the periphery can appear to claim space, negotiate, make trouble.

This paper is written with the hope that praxis in the time of empire can turn the heart of power into a profound edge of struggle and dissent. For readers familiar with the writings of Gabriel Garcia Marquez, it must be obvious that the title of my paper is modeled after his beautiful novel, *Love in the Time of Cholera* (1985). Garcia Marquez's genre of writing, "magical realism," embodies a unity of contradictions, a deep paradox, that rivals that of empire. That point aside, *Love in the Time of Cholera* is a novel about waiting: where Florentino Ariza waits 51 years, 9 months, and 4 days, for Fermina Daza, who had once promised to be his wife but then had retracted her promise. In these years he has 622 liasons. But when they finally lie together, wrinkled bodies, fermenting breath, during a pleasure cruise on the Magdalena river, he tells her that he has waited for her as a virgin. The boat they are on is aptly named "The New Fidelity." It is the time of cholera and the river is filled with swollen corpses; the river banks whisper with ghosts. But Florentino and Fermina ask the captain to fly the cholera flag so that they can avoid having to dock, so that they can be

quarantined to sail forever and ever on the Magdalena, between the narrowing sandbars and the singing mantees. Cholera [like empire] serves as the pretense for an existence that has been waiting in the wings for 51 years, 9 months, 4 days.

II. THE TIME OF EMPIRE

It is not my intention to provide a comprehensive empirical and theoretical overview of the empire debates. Instead, I will only sketch some key dimensions in order to indicate "the time of empire." The current moment of empire has been conceptualized by Neil Smith (2005) as the "endgame of globalization." In keeping with world-systems theorists like Wallerstein (2002), Smith emphasizes the long duration of empire. For Smith (2003, xv), the war on terror must be understood as "a war to fill in the interstices of globalization" where nation-states like Iraq or Afghanistan or regions like the West Bank are finally captured by the system of global capitalism. This, he states, is an American Empire because it is an expansionism undertaken by and on behalf of the ruling classes of America. And it can only be understood in relation to previous failed moments of American global ambition. Samir Amin (2001) also lays out a long duration of Empire, although his timeline is somewhat different. Arguing that imperialism is inherent in capitalist expansion, he draws attention to three imperial moments: the conquest of the Americas by mercantilist Atlantic Europe; the colonial subjection of Asia and Africa by industrializing Europe; and the present moment marked by the collapse of the Soviet Union and of Third World populist regimes. In such analysis, the current moment of empire, or Harvey's (2003) "new imperialism," is the latest "spatio-temporal fix" for the crises of capitalism, a fix writ large in global geography.

But empire does not simply resolve the contradictions of capital accumulation. In true dialectic fashion, empire also generates a series of contradictions. Smith (2005) argues that the most enduring contradiction is a rabid nationalism that undermines American global expansionist ambitions. For Harvey (2003), the contradictions of empire are manifest in anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist struggles, including those that play out in the "real battleground" of America. Postcolonial

accounts of empire complicate the neo-Marxist interpretation of empire's contradictions. Writing against Huntington's infamous "clash of civilizations" thesis, Tariq Ali (2002) provocatively argues that what is at work is in fact a collusion of fundamentalisms – the mutual constitution of market fundamentalism and religious fundamentalism. Paying particular attention to Afghanistan, he shows how this "enemy territory" has been geopolitically constructed through American strategic interests. The unholy alliance between market fundamentalism and religious fundamentalism has also been forcefully demonstrated by Timothy Mitchell (2002) through his concept of "McJihad." Arguing against Benjamin Barber's idea that we live in an era of Jihad vs. McWorld where "jihad" or a variety of tribal particularisms and "narrowly conceived faiths" are opposed to or resist the the homogenizing "universal" force of capital, Mitchell makes the case for paying attention to how they are allied with one another:

> The terms of this debate are quite misleading. We live in an age, if one wants to use these unfortunate labels, of "McJihad." It is an age in which the mechanisms of capitalism appear to operate, in certain critical instances, only by adopting the social force and moral authority of conservative Islamic movements (Mitchell 2002, 3).

The analytical emphasis on the contradictions and collusions of empire is important. At the very least, it points to the fragility of empire, to how empire is not simply a given fact but instead has to be constantly constructed, often in paradoxical ways. But there is one more dimension of empire that requires attention: liberalism. For it is through an analysis of empire's benevolence that imperial hegemony must be understood.

It is not only the neo-Marxists who see empire as the "endgame of globalization." So do the (neo)liberals. In the aftermath of 9/11, the (neo)liberal triumphalism of free-market globalization gurus like Thomas Friedman has morphed into the imperial triumphalism of empire-builders like Niall Ferguson (2002). Friedman has long argued that economic globalization is the most important front in the "war on terror," that the "Arab Street" can be tamed by free market opportunities, and that this is the story of a populous but increasingly prosperous South Asia. There

were no Muslims from South Asia among the 9/11 hijackers, is usually his line. But Ferguson & company go much further. In a systematic account of "liberal empire," they call for the sustained occupation and rule of underdeveloped countries. For example, Max Boot (2002) has loudly called for America to live up to its Kiplingesque "white man's burden" and provide "anarchic countries like Afghanistan with the sort of enlightened foreign administration once provided by self-confident Englishmen in jodhpurs and pith helmets." Making the rather elaborate argument that American imperialism, unlike European imperialism, has been concerned with the promotion of freedom and democracy rather than with economic exploitation, Boot puts forth a vision of benevolent Empire. Building on Samuel Huntington's work, he makes an analogy between US interventions in South America and those by Federal marshals in the conduct of elections in the American South in the 1960s: registering voters, protecting against electoral violence, ensuring a free vote and an honest count. The goal he argues was always, as Woodrow Wilson had once stated, "to teach the South American republics to elect good men" (Boot 2002, 63). It is an analogy that legitimizes the imperial enterprise in the name of democracy, as what Smith (2005: 173) calls "liberal moral order."

Other proponents of Empire maintain the argument that America must lead but must do so through a multilateral imperial project. Robert Cooper (2002), foreign policy advisor to Tony Blair, argues that "if rogue premodern states become too dangerous for established states to tolerate, it is possible to imagine a defensive imperialism. The most logical way to deal with chaos, and the one most employed in the past is colonization." Yet he goes on to make the case for a "postmodern imperialism," "one acceptable to a world of human rights and cosmopolitan values – an imperialism which, like all imperialism, aims to bring order and organization but which rests today on the voluntary principle" (see also Ignatieff, 2004). It is thus that Hardt and Negri (2000, 15), in their much-discussed book, *Empire*, note that "empire is formed not on the basis of force itself but on the basis of the capacity to present force as being in the service of peace and right." They argue (2000, 160) that a new principle of sovereignty is being affirmed at this moment of just wars: "liberty is made sovereign and sovereignty is defined as radically democratic within an open and continuous process of expansion." Here, empire is animated by America, by the model

of Jeffersonian territoriality that is the founding idea of the American nation. This paradigm of liberal empire has echoes in earlier moments of global liberalism. The project of international development, forged in the crucible of the Cold War and formalized in the Bretton Woods institutions, was the management of the liberal promise of modernization and trickle-down growth (Pieterse 2000). In the 1980s, neoliberal globalization recast these promises as the (neo)liberal promise of the free market. Both frameworks operated with a trusteeship view of development, continuing the "civilizing mission" of 19th century colonialism (Cowen and Shenton 1995). This notion of benevolent trusteeship is today revived through empire. The duty to intervene and the capacity to intervene are put forward in the name of civilization, peace, and justice.

III. LIBERAL EMPIRE IN THE CIRCUITS OF THE PROFESSIONS

In times of war, a common ethical impulse in the field of planning has been a call for peace and a rejection of military violence. During the Vietnam war, during the Gulf Wars, professional groups of planners and architects have refused their support for the military actions of nation-states. This ethics of disavowal is crucial. But often such a position on war is less a matter of refusal and more an act of neutrality. Often such a position reflects the sovereign ethics of a profession that is seen to be in sharp contrast with the ethics of military sovereignty. I am not suggesting that such ethical platforms of peace are insignificant. I am however suggesting that the ethics of disavowal and refusal is much more complicated when the practices of the profession and the practices of empire are closely aligned, when these practices coincide under the sign of liberal empire.

One instance of this ethical dilemma stems from precisely the doubleness of empire: that empire destroys but also rebuilds; empire wages war but also distributes humanitarian aid. Professions like planning can play a significant role in these practices of reconstruction and benevolence. It is often difficult to say no to the contracts in Iraq and the studios in Afghanistan. There is the seduction of "empire capitalism," of the largesse that is distributed by the military-industrial complex.

Such resources, also evident in the "disaster capitalism" that has followed in the wake of the Asian tsunami, play a vital role in an increasingly corporatized university setting where private funds must substitute for state support and where fund-raising entrepreneurship is lauded as academic success. But it is even harder to articulate an ethics of refusal when this means refusing the liberal moral order of benevolent planning, of responsible planners getting it right and easing the sufferings imposed by war and empire. How can one not participate in rebuilding lives in Afghanistan? How can one not participate in designing social services for the Iraqis? Would not the retreat of planners cede this territory to those less benevolent, less trained, less caring? Might it not be possible to subvert the imperial goals of these institutions by working for them? I call this ethical dilemma the "band-aid myth." It is a dilemma that operates with the notion that the ills of war and empire can be assuaged by the band-aid of reconstruction. It also puts forth the argument that it is worth allying with imperial institutions in order to do good. The "band-aid" myth is a dilemma because it renders ambiguous what is complicity and what is subversion.

Another ethical dilemma arises when the professionalism of planning is disembedded from the context of action, when planners and architects claim that they have no responsibility for the field of power in which they operate. The most dramatic instance of such a dilemma is perhaps the Palestinian territories, as evident in the incisive and courageous analysis of Segal and Weizman (2003). Building on the important work of geographer and planning theorist, Oren Yiftachel, Segal and Weizman depict the Palestinian territories as occupied land, an imperial frontier of state-sponsored settlements, development towns, and garden suburbs. This is an extreme version of Graham and Marvin's (2001) "splintering urbanism" for here patterns of segregation take on a dizzying verticality – a complete separation of Zionist infrastructure and Palestinian survival in two spheres of existence, a separation maintained through military and police power. But the difficult aspects of Segal and Weizman's analysis come not in the dominance of the Israeli military apparatus; they come in "the question of the responsibility and culpability of Israeli architects and planners within the context of the conflict, and especially in the construction of the Jewish settlements in the West Bank" (2003: 20). As also discussed by Graham (2003), the strategy of Israeli "urbicide" is multi-pronged: there are the bulldozers and

missiles but there is also the strategic transformation of the landscape through land-use, transportation, and environmental planning. In such a case, can the planner claim to be an "innocent professional" (Segal and Weizman, 2003: 16)?

The myth of the "innocent professional" is an enduring dilemma in professions like planning and architecture. It can be argued that these professions are concerned only with utilitarian cost-benefit analysis of the greatest good for the greatest number, or with the design mandate of beauty, or with the professional imperative of meeting the needs of the client. Planners and architects can be responsible for such circumscribed tasks but not for the vast and overwhelming politics of empire. But is it possible to disassociate the "innocent professional" from the political regimes within which they work? Dilemmas such as the band-aid solution or professional innocence, complicate the ethics of disavowal, of simply saying no. They indicate that in a time of empire it is perhaps not enough to simply stake out neutrality; it is perhaps not enough to reject the tactics of militarized war; it is also perhaps necessary to see through what Harvey (2003, 210) calls the "liberal ruse of empire." The time of empire has to therefore be the occasion for critical reflection on some of the constitutive practices of planning, an interrogation of planning's innocence, an analysis of planning's own liberal ruse. To this end, in the rest of this paper, I examine one constitutive planning practice: the frontier of renewal and the ways in which it operates through liberal ruses like "freedom" and "beauty."

Angelus Novus

Empire is expansion. The expansionism of empire takes place through various instruments including the military-industrial complex. The conceptualization of the military-industrial complex as a growth machine is by now well documented, including in the important analysis of Markusen et al (1991) of what they call the "gunbelt." Most recently, David Harvey (2003) has argued that the expansionism of empire, its dynamics of growth, must be understood as primitive accumulation. While Marx presents primitive accumulation, i.e. accumulation based on predation, fraud, violence, robbery, dispossession, as an original moment, Harvey points to ongoing processes of primitive accumulation, those that accompany expanded reproduction.

He sees neoliberal development – the privatizations, the displacement of peoples for massive infrastructure projects, the dismantling of welfare – as evidence of this continuing primitive accumulation. Such analyses of the political economy of empire are important for several reasons. First, it makes evident the interlocking of capitalism and imperial strategy, such that empire is not an originary phase of capitalism but in fact is an omnipresence. Second, it highlights the constant violence through which capital accumulation is achieved, as in Baudrillard's (1986) striking primal scenes of primitive violence that constitute America as "utopia achieved." The violence is not exceptional or anomalous; rather it is necessary, it is fundamental.

Such empire talk is crucial for how planning is conceptualized. In the simplest sense, it transcribes the liberal geography of the "sunbelt" into the illiberal geography of the "gunbelt," showing how planning is tied up with the military-industrial complex. It reveals the darkness of primitive violence that persists in the Marxist city of social reproduction and collective consumption (Yiftachel 1995). It indicates that the dialectic of "creative destruction" lies at the heart of planning, that planning's promise of creation and creativity is not possible without a frontier of destruction. In other words, empire talk politicizes planning's keywords, notably the keyword of "renewal." In a piece on the American neoliberal city, Neil Smith (1997, 133), notes that it is hard to define the term "justice" in relation to the urban landscape. He finds most definitions of justice to be steeped in liberalism – justice as expressing certain hopes and aspirations but not diagnosing a particular structural condition. He contrasts it with the Marxist term "exploitation," arguing that here is a term that is "simultaneously a judgement about social injustice and a measure of economic productivity; the calculation of the capitalist rate of surplus value was simultaneously the calculation of the workers' rate of exploitation; a critique of liberal justice was always already inscribed in the analytical "description" of capitalism." I would argue that the term "renewal" can have similar force in a critical approach to planning: that it is simultaneously a measure of economic productivity and a judgment about social injustice; that it is simultaneously an expression of expanded (gentrified) reproduction and of primitive accumulation through dispossession and displacement.

But such accounts of "exploitation" and "renewal" are accounts of modernity. As constituent elements of the broader concept of "creative destruction" they participate in the Marxist teleology of modernization, of the Faustian bargain that must be struck in order for captialism to move forward. Berman (1982), in his seminal work, *All that is Solid Melts into Air*, provides a haunting narrative of this Faustian bargain in Robert Moses's New York, in Hausmann's Paris. To destroy a city in order to renew it – this after all is planning's modernity, its dialectic of progress. But empire talk can do more than simply reveal the Faustian bargain of progress. It can also call into question the idea of progress. Here, it is worth moving beyond Marxist modernization to the critique of progress presented by Walter Benjamin. In his "Theses on the Philosophy of History," Benjamin (1950: 257) discusses a painting by Klee:

> "Angelus Novus" shows an angel looking though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe, which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage, and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.

In the time of empire, Benjamin's "Angelus Novus" is a critical trope, one that calls into the liberal ruse of progress and rejects the liberal consolations of creative destruction.[1] In Benjamin's hellish modernity, renewal is uncertain, buried beneath the debris, and barely understood by the angel of history. It is through the critical figure of "Angelus Novus" that I approach the question of planning in the time of empire. In doing so, I engage less with the political economy of empire and more with the aesthetics of empire. I do so partly because the political economy of empire has been already discussed at great length, including in the texts that I reference in the previous section. I also do so because the aesthetics of empire is the most seductive liberal ruse, securing hegemonic consent through the strategies of renewal, beauty,

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[1] For a haunting account of "Angelus Novus" see Gregory's (2004) the "angel of Iraq."

and freedom. Given that my analysis is more inspired by postcolonial theory than by neo-Marxism, I am constantly aware of this genre's interest in the relationship between culture and power, of Edward Said's insistence that culture, through the production, circulation, and legitimation of meaning enters fully into the constitution of the world (see also Gregory, 2004: 8). I therefore re-state the ethical dilemmas of disavowal and refusal in the context of two aesthetic strategies: freedom and beauty.

The Rule of Freedom[2]

In 2002, George W. Bush gave a speech at West Point claiming that the 20th century had ended with "a single surviving model of human progress," - America. This speech echoed the 2002 National Security Strategy of the US, which opens with the sentence: The great struggles of the 20th century between liberty and totalitarianism ended with a decisive victory for the forces of freedom – and a single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy, and free enterprise" (Pieterse, 2004: 120). This "liberal empire" or what Pieterse (2004) calls "neoliberal empire" is based on the foundational equation of free market=liberal democracy. This genre of liberalism draws inspiration from the minimalist social contract of John Locke, the utilitarianism of John Stuart Mill, the conservative libertarianism of Friedrich von Hayek and Robert Nozick, and the neoliberalism of Milton Friedman. It calls empire into being under the sign of the free market and a minimalist state (minimalist in social responsibilities, expansionist in military capacity) and in the name of liberal freedoms.

The issue here is not simply that American empire seeks to put forward a (neo)liberal model of progress through the application of illiberal military force. Rather, the issue is what Rose (1999) presciently labeled the "powers of freedom," the ways in which (neo)liberal power governs through the modality of freedom. Rose rightly notes that the grand theorists of liberal freedoms were also the designers of prisons, devising mechanisms of panopticon power as the infrastructure of democratic societies. But he goes further, showing how (neo)liberal rule deploys particular conceptions of freedom, notably those linked to the free market. The subject of such freedoms is a self-governing entity, set free by the dismantling of welfare, by free trade

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[2] This title is of course a reference to Joyce (2003).

agreements, free to be the entrepreneurial poor rather than the old-fashioned proletariat. In some of my earlier work (Roy 2004), I have characterized such forms of subject-production as the "aestheticization of poverty," a heroic narrative of freedom that is an integral element of neoliberalism.

For a while, even in the Reagan years, it was possible to unpack the (neo)liberal ruse of freedom. The freedom promised by the end of welfare could be shown to be empty. The hollowness of NAFTA's freedom was evident at the militarized US-Mexico border with its maquiladoras, deadly crossing-zones, and citizen vigilantism. But in the post 9-11 era, freedom has once again become a liberal ruse. It is possible to laugh at the parochialism of "freedom fries," to dismiss the White House's "freedom corps," to see Bush's State of the Union speeches laced with "freedom" talk as yet another "Top Gun" performance. But it is not so easy to set aside the modality of "freedom" as it permeates the aesthetics of planning, architecture, and urban design. Perhaps this is most evident in the "renewal" project that is Ground Zero. Several years after 9-11, the design plans are still being finalized. There continues to be discussion about a cultural space that will complement the proposed memorial being designed by Michael Arad and Peter Walker. How will America remember? One idea that has persisted is the notion of a "museum of freedom" that will have four educational modules that recount, in concentric rings, the struggle for freedom. Ground Zero, the site of the assault on freedom is the first module. New York, the world's city, is the second module. America, with its "ever-widening circle of freedom" is the third module. Last is the fourth module, the World, which will "shine a spotlight on places that lack basic human freedoms." In his *New York Times* critique of the design, Herbert Muschamp (Aug 31, 2003) writes: "At what point does a cultural use educational modules become indistinguishable from a strategy room for territorial expansion?"

Similar fantasies of freedom mark the high design of Daniel Libeskind. The unifying concept of Libeskind's winning competition entry is not only that 9-11 signified an assault on freedom, but also the argument that high design can recover freedom. In "memory foundations," Libeskind (www.daniel-libeskind.com/press/) explains the logic of his design as prompted by the memory of arriving by ship to New

York as a teenager, an immigrant, his first sight that of the Statue of Liberty: "I have never forgotten that sight or what it stands for. This is what this project is about." Each component of this design is high symbolism, each symbolizing freedom. Libeskind sees the slurry wall holding back the Hudson River as heroic, as eloquent as the American Constitution itself, asserting the durability of democracy.[3]

Critics have argued that this fantasy of freedom proceeds through a mimetic symmetry, one that sets up the architect as the exact counter-figure to the terrorist. Darton (2002) argues that to attempt creation or destruction on such an immense scale requires both bombers and master-builders to view living processes in general and social life in particular with a high degree of abstraction. The mimetic symmetry of freedom and unfreedom also does something else: it sets up rebuilding as patriotism and inscribes Wall Street as synonymous with freedom and democracy. Wrapped in this fantasy of freedom, Ground Zero no longer appears as the real economy of the real-estate markets of Lower Manhattan. These are the machinations that now elude public discourse through the aspirations of a 1776 feet high Freedom Tower.

The liberal ruse of freedom, when translated into the aesthetics of urban renewal and high architecture, is troubling because it depoliticizes the production of space. The aesthetics of liberal democracy asserts a virginal innocence, what I have elsewhere called the "ideology of space," the argument that space is free, unfettered, and infinitely manipulable (Roy 2004). This is the frontier of colonial planning. So, in 1945 as the French Minister of Colonies surveyed his vast territories in North Africa, he proclaimed: "There space is free and cities can be constructed according to principles of reason and beauty" (Wright 1991). But it is also more generally the frontier of renewal that is planning. Against the ideology of innocence, of "free" space, it is necessary to remember the primitive accumulation and original violence that constitutes city-space. In the case of Ground Zero, Libeskind's fantasy of freedom takes on quite different meaning when located in the circuits that produce space, namely the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation and the exclusive and exclusionary interests that it represents. The liberal moral order signified by

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[3] Most recently Libeskind's design has undergone significant alterations in order to ensure a "secure" building. The fortress-like street presence of the new tower will be an ironic commentary on the ideology of freedom.

Libeskind's design has to be re-interpreted when informed by the complex history of the Ground Zero site: the eradication of native-Americans, colonial wars between the Dutch and the British, a brisk slave market at the foot of what is now Wall Street, and various rounds of urban renewal that displaced the once thriving Syrian quarter to make way for the needs of global financial capital. There are other bodies buried here, including what in 1991 was designated as the African Burial ground, the remains of as many as 20,000 of the city's first African Americans, predominantly slaves, who had been worked to death.[4]

The Rule of Beauty

Empire is beautiful. Thus, writes Ferguson (2002, xxiv):

> As I travelled around that Empire's remains in the first half of 2002, I was constantly struck by its ubiquitous creativity. To imagine the world without the Empire would be to expunge from the map the elegant boulevards of Williamsburg and old Philadelphia; to sweep into the sea the squat battlements of Port Royal, Jamaica, to return to the bush the glorious skyline of Sydney. Without the British Empire there would be no Calcutta, no Bombay, no Madras. Indians may rename them as many times as they like, but these vast metropoles remain cities founded and built by the British.

Ferguson's narrative knits together the diverse and disparate sites of British colonialism into one homely geography. It effects an epistemic violence that indicates the violence of colonialism. Following Spivak (1988), it can be argued that the incantation of names, far from being a composition of place, is precisely the combination of assimilation and appropriation that one might call violation. But it also expresses an evaluation of empire in the crucible of taste, in primarily aesthetic terms (Dutta 2005). The incantation of names is then a signifier of the reach of empire's rule of beauty: designs of colonial architecture hailed by spatial theorists as elevated theoretical hypotheses of modern urbanism (Tafuri 1976); outposts of occupation as laboratories of planning experiments (Segal and Weizman 2003); imperial trusteeship for primitive histories that are to be preserved as signs of benevolence.

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[4] For precisely such a critical history of Ground Zero see Sorkin and Zukin (2002).

For professions like architecture and planning, the disavowal of this rule of beauty is difficult because empire presents a range of aesthetic opportunities – to experiment, build, construct, the Corbusian fantasy of colonialism. But disavowal is even more difficult because empire often asserts a Kantian equivalence of beauty and morality. In his *Kritik of Judgment*, Kant (1790) is not willing to allow aesthetic judgment to be subject to the heteronomy of empirical principles, to taste, to the perception of sensations, to the pleasure of contemplation. Instead, he asserts that "the Beautiful is the symbol of the morally Good, and that it is only in this respect that it gives pleasure with a claim for the agreement of everyone else" (1790, 250-1). In other words, it is through the structural congruence of Beauty and Morality that Kant asserts the universality of aesthetic judgment. Kant goes further by arguing that such aesthetic judgment indicates a moral teleology, the *freedom* of man's faculty of desire, a *final purpose* of creation which must be interpreted as a moral purpose rather than as a pleasure principle (1790, 370).

The absolutism of Kantian philosophy, the fundamentalism of its creationist ideology, is evident in this argument about a moral teleology, one that merges the rule of beauty and the rule of freedom. But it is instructive to note the geopolitical imagination that is inevitably bound up with such aesthetic absolutism, to map the geographies of this moral teleology. In an instructive analysis, Harvey (2000a) situates Kant's *Enlightenment* narrative in relation to one of his less famous works, *Geography*. *Geography*, as Harvey notes, is a documentation of geographic diversity, listing the customs and habits of different populations, an aesthetic mapping. And yet it is also a moral judgment, sorting through various races on the basis of talent, capacity, and abilities. It is, as Harvey argues, a "racial art," a rather shocking addendum to Kant's universal and cosmopolitan principles. Kant's *Geography* suggests not a singular moral teleology but rather a philosophy that envisions different races situated at different rungs of the teleological order. In other words, the universality of beauty turns out to be highly differentiated zones of freedom and moral purpose, what postcolonial theorists have identified as the "rule of difference." But the converse is also true: that the "rule of difference" is aestheticized such that racialized power, imperial power, is made evident only as a difference in aesthetic judgment and

aesthetic trusteeship. Such aesthetic arguments are also of course arguments about freedom and moral purpose. Here is an example from occupied Iraq.

As American forces and security contractors have occupied Iraq, so they have sought to "reconstruct" the country. One form of this "reconstruction" has come through the preservation of Iraq's "authentic history." This aesthetic project is presented not through the urgency of archaeologists and historians but rather through the urgency of liberal soldiers who see themselves as guardians of cultural patrimony. So, in the universal space of the internet, Babylon's architecture is shared with the world by Gunnery Sergeant Daniel O'Connell of the US Marine Corps. The marine corps now occupies the palaces built by Saddam Hussein at Babylon, in what was the dictator's massive "reconstruction" of the historical city. Saddam's Babylon is comprised of gargantuan palaces, a remake of the Ishtar gate, of the coliseum, of the hanging gardens. 2500 years ago Nebuchadnezzar had his workers inscribe each tablet of clay in cuneiform script. New Babylon's bricks are inscribed with the following: "In the era of Saddam Hussein, protector of Iraq, who rebuilt civilization and rebuilt Babylon." It is the American soldier, living in Saddam's palace, looking out on to the ruins of Old Babylon, who tells us the difference between the new and the old, the authentic and the fake, the historical and the vulgar. Posting his photographs and commentary to an architectural history website (http:// architecture.about.com/ library/ bl-babylon.html), Sergeant O'Connell gives us a lesson in both history and aesthetics, telling us about Nebuchadnezzar and Hammurabi but also about how Saddam used architecture to shock and awe. He is a crucial figure in what Mirzoeff (2005, 13) has called the "military-visual complex," the apparatus through which visual subjects and dream-images are produced. How do we begin to make sense of the figure of the soldier turned architectural historian who is now the trustee of aesthetic judgment? How do we deal with the figure of the soldier turned tourist, taking and giving tours amidst the ruins of history? As I browse Sergeant O'Connell's website, a line from Virilio (2002) haunts me: when will the moment of truth be not only aesthetic but also ethical?

IV. MEDIATION

Earlier in this paper I argued that, in the time of empire, the ethics of disavowal and refusal is difficult. This is especially the case when planning is confronted not with the military apparatus of empire but instead with the rule of freedom and the rule of beauty. In the rest of this paper, I put forward "mediation" as a philosophy of praxis in the time of empire. In the most direct sense, the concept of mediation politicizes the production of space. Shattering the virginal innocence of immaculately conceived aesthetics, mediation forefronts the politics of birthing, the politics of reproduction. In his important work on hegemony and consciousness, Raymond Williams (1977) makes a distinction between reflection and mediation. He conceptualizes reflection as mechanical materialism, a way of seeing the world as objects – the object of design, the object of development, the object of professional expertise. Mediation, on the other hand, is an active process. It is an act of intercession, reconciliation, or interpretation between adversaries or strangers, between society and art. Following Adorno, Williams reminds us that mediation is in the object itself, in other words that there cannot be a separation between the act of creation and the object of creation. In this sense, the concept of "mediation" is as Goonewardena (2005: 51) has recently argued, "an invitation – a challenge- to problematize the "process[es]" of ideological mediation of our own cities ... where "agency" itself is mediated to such an extent that is barely perceptible ... a call to *mediate*, to *make* ideology *mediate*, that is, to intervene critically and render ideology *visible*: break its *spell*."[5]

But there are other nuances to the concept of mediation. In planning, mediation is often used in the common sense of mediating or resolving conflict. In a more theoretical sense, it signifies Habermas's idea of a mediating infrastructure of civil society, the liberal democracy of a public sphere. But this paradigm of mediation, embedded as it is in communicative rationality, must be called into question. Can it, as Hardt and Negri (2004, 261) ask, stand "outside the instrumentality of capital and mass media?" Despite their overall optimism about the powers of the "multitude,"

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[5] Note that Goonewardena is using other Marxist concepts of mediation, not one derived from Williams and Marxist cultural studies.

Hardt and Negri call into question the Habermasian idea of mediation as ethical communication, instead arguing that "we are all already inside, contaminated." Their critique exposes, I would argue, the limits of liberalism. Can mediation be radical practice if it is inside the system? Can mediation always break the spell of ideology if it is inevitably contaminated? Can mediation expose the liberal ruses of empire if it is beholden to the liberal ideal of ethical communication? Here, it is worth noting that Williams (1977, 100) is not fully comfortable with the concept of mediation. He sees it as not fully expressing the "constitutive and constituting sense" in which he means it; he sees it instead as maintaining a sense of "intermediary." Williams's discomfort is perhaps productive for a philosophy of praxis. On the one hand, the concept of mediation can be deployed to think about how planners do not simply act on or reflect upon objects, they produce them through material and discursive practices. They are not innocent professionals. They are, for better or worse, implicated in the production of the world. On the other hand, the concept of mediation also indicates the ways in which planners assert distance, how they stand apart from this constitutive process, how through the modalities of freedom and beauty they claim to be intermediaries of benevolence, moral purpose, and ethical communication.

I will visit the "doubleness" of Williams's concept of mediation later in this paper. But let me first emphasize that what is at stake here is a *post-liberal* philosophy of praxis, one that focuses, as does Hillier (2003) on agonistic space rather than on associational space, one that emphasizes political rationality rather than communicative rationality. Here, I echo Vanessa Watson who, at the ACSP 2004 conference, called for an alternative to the universalized liberalism of planning discourse and practice. In conference discussions, Sandercock, Forester, and Throgmorton, argued in various ways that Watson's concept of "deep difference" left planning with little prospect for the praxis of listening, communicating, and mediating.[6] Watson's insistence on the irreconciliability of certain moments and forms of difference is important, for it signals the limits of liberal planning. These limits are acutely and painfully evident at a moment when liberalism calls into being empire. If praxis is framed as the choice between listening and talking on the one hand and guns and violence on the other hand, then of course one is drawn to the former. But a

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[6] For a fuller discussion of "deep difference" see Watson (2003).

post-liberal conception of praxis also recognizes the forms of epistemic and symbolic violence that can attend even the most well-meaning forms of listening and talking, the intermediary power that negotiates mediation.

Doubleness

I have already suggested that the concept of mediation has a certain doubleness. On the one hand it is in the object itself, a constitutive and constituting process. On the other hand, it asserts a certain autonomy, a sense of the intermediary. This doubleness, I argue, is quite productive for a philosophy of praxis. It is thus worth exploring different dimensions of doubleness as articulated in Marxist theory, cultural studies, and postcolonial critique.

In his surprisingly utopian book, *Spaces of Hope*, Harvey (2000b) calls on the "insurgent architect" to enact transformation. He uses the term architect broadly to indicate all those involved in organizing space. What is at stake he argues is the right to the production of space. But there is a doubleness that haunts this idea. Harvey, as he conjures up the figure of the insurgent architect, reminds us that the architect is not a figure of freedom. He or she is a historically constructed figure, an embodied person, an agent of spatial change but also a member of the professional elite. In his words: "The architect appears as a cog in the wheel of capitalist urbanization, as much constructed by as constructor of the process" (Harvey 2000b, 237). This is the doubleness that complicates the question of mediation.

The idea of doubleness is also powerfully articulated in black cultural studies, notably in the work of W.E.B. Du Bois (1903). Writing about the ritual brutality that structured "civilized" life in the South, Du Bois uses the racialized and racializing terror of slavery to interrogate the narrative of progress (see Gilroy 1993: 119). The doubleness of modernity is expressed in the "double consciousness" that haunts the black subject: "One ever feels his twoness – an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder" (Du Bois in Gilroy, 1993: 126). In the writings of Richard Wright and Cornel West, this doubleness is deepened;

it becomes a "splitting process." But the idea of doubleness comes to mean something else in the work of Henry Louis Gates (1988). Here doubleness is signification, a way of making meaning. Signifyin(g) is a "double-voiced utterance," a "double play" executed by the African-American subject by putting to use hegemonic discourses while imbuing them with a signal difference, deferential yet disruptive. Gates posits the possibility that praxis can be simultaneously sell-out and signification. In the time of empire, is it possible to use this notion of doubleness to think about the simultaneity of complicity and subversion? It is important to note that the ethics of doubleness is not the ethics of disavowal. But it is an ethics forged under conditions of extreme power where the ethical autonomy required to articulate disavowal and refusal might be lacking. The ethics of doubleness is a provisional and improvisational praxis, one that is perhaps more appropriate for a post-liberal planning which cannot claim professional innocence.

The simultaneity of complicity and subversion is worth carrying over to the realm of aesthetics, the cultural politics of empire on which I have focused quite a bit of my attention in this paper. As argued by Marcuse (1978) in his important essay, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, Marxist theory treats aesthetics as ideology, reading art as an (im)mediate expression of class interests. This is the base-superstructure formula that sees art as reflection, usually as false or distorted reflection (Williams 1977: 95). Williams's notion of "mediation" is meant to break with this simplistic notion of aesthetics as ideology and of radical practice as "true" reflection. I would argue that the doubleness of mediation points to a certain doubleness in aesthetic politics, one that opens up rather than closes off various possibilities of praxis. It is thus that Marcuse makes a case for the "radical qualities of art," for the potential of a "counter-consciousness" (1978: 6, 9). Radical art, of course, has shaped generations of protest – from the counter-spectacles of the 1968 Situationist International (Debord 1967) to the Art and Revolution puppetry of the anti-globalization movements. Marcuse's argument is more complex though – for it insists that art is radical not when it is closely tied to praxis but when it instead expresses a "consciousness of crisis" (1978: 19), one often emanating from agents of class power.

This doubleness of aesthetics is most skilfully developed in the work of Walter Benjamin. As interpreted by Buck-Morss (1989), Benjamin's analysis of fin-de-siecle capitalism is also an analysis of the "dialectics of seeing." On the one hand, Benjamin pinpoints the source of modern power as the "reenchantment of the social world," breaking with Weber's thesis of modern power as the triumph of abstract formal reason (Buck-Morss, 1989: 254). It is a diagnosis that requires of professions like planning a closer look at the rule of beauty. Paris, "the capital of the 19th century," is thus the city of light, the city of mirrors, a phantasmagoria where the commodity-on-display turns politics itself into a phantasmagoria. On the other hand, Benjamin asserts the possibility of a politics that emerges from the aesthetics of ruins, from the aesthetic experience of the debris of history. This, for him, is the transformative capacity of the "arcades": a space that conjures up the city of light and mirrors but in its dusty abandonment signifies the transitory nature of progress. This, for him, is the radical capacity of Baudelaire's writings on Haussmann's Paris – a "consciousness of crisis," to use Marcuse's phrase, that emanates not from "les miserables" but rather from the anguished contradictions of the urban bourgeois class. Such aesthetic politics would have us think about radical praxis not as the counter-spectacle of protest but rather as the contradictions and crisis embedded in the spectacle of empire. Is it possible to revisit the soldier turned architectural historian in this light? Is there, in that narrative of aesthetic judgment, a "consciousness of crisis"? Where is the consciousness of crisis in the certainty of Libeskind's Freedom Tower?

In this sense, praxis in the time of empire, this consciousness of crisis is an expansive concept. Working in and through the aesthetic modalities of empire, recognizing how empire aestheticizes power, it expands the concept of politics. It is this expansiveness that is evident in a 1991 poem by Adrienne Rich, titled "What Kind of Times are These?" The poem is inspired by one of Bertolt Brecht's poems, "To Posterity:" "What kinds of times are these/ when it's almost a crime to talk about trees/because it means keeping still about so many evil deeds." Brecht makes the distinction between high politics and low politics, choosing between the talk of evil deeds and the talk of trees, between praxis and silence about injustice. In feminist fashion, Adrienne Rich unsettles these distinctions. She tells us that the talk of trees is political not simply because it is a disguise for some other important talk, but rather

because it is important in its own right. It is about the buying and selling of territory at "the edge of dread." And because to make people listen, "in times like these/ to have you listen at all, it's necessary/ to talk about trees" (Rich 1995, 3).

V. CONCLUSION: PLANNING'S IDENTITY

The dilemma of a praxis in the time of empire is the dilemma of planning's identity. Writing at the heart of empire, I have sought to put forward the idea of "doubleness," such that the center of power can also be a profound edge of negotiation and contestation, a consciousness of crisis. In my discussion of the ontology of planning, I have drawn upon the Marxist concept of "mediation," one recalibrated by theorists such as Raymond Williams and Herbert Marcuse who have sought not only to provide a Marxist interpretation of culture but also to suggest a cultural interpretation of Marxism. But I have found it necessary to engage with *black* cultural studies for it is in this analytical realm that the limits of the liberal moral order are called into question, that Benjamin's "hellish Modernity" is revealed. In closing, I would like to continue the discussion of doubleness but this time by turning to postcolonial critique for ethical insights.

The ethics of postcoloniality is not the ethics of disavowal and refusal. Such possibilities are closed off by the acute awareness of complicity, participation, and privilege that marks the writings of theorists like Gayatri Spivak. Spivak challenges us to think about the ethics of responsibility that might attend the complicit (post)colonial agent. Spivak argues that "development is the dominant global denomination of responsibility (Spivak, 1994: 52)." One can of course substitute the word "empire" for development. How can this instrumentalized relationship between responsibility and empire be challenged and reformulated? Spivak suggests two ways, each with implications for a philosophy of praxis. The first is the recasting of responsibility as accountability[7]:

> I can formalize responsibility in the following way: It is that all action is undertaken in response to a call… Response here involves not only "respond to"

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[7] Note that Spivak herself does not use the term accountability.

as in "give an answer to" but also the related situations of "answering to" as in being responsible for a name … of being answerable for (Spivak, 1994, 22).

In other words, a pedagogy of global responsibility cannot simply articulate the duty to intervene, a duty that can call into being 21st century Empire or the civilizing mission of 19th century colonialism or the diagnosis and reform of 20th century development. It must also insist on accountability, on "answering to" those who are the objects of our responsibility. The formal profession of planning, I would argue, pays attention to responsibility but not accountability. That struggle has been taken up by international social movements and by planners who have adopted more activist roles. In the time of empire, it is not enough to be responsible. It is also necessary to be accountable.

The second is the confrontation with benevolence. In a recent article called "Righting Wrongs," Spivak (2004) argues that her greatest pedagogical task in the US academy is to teach American students that their enthusiastic benevolence is an imagination of othering. Here she sees an important pedagogical role for the humanities. If professions like planning are predicated on an instrumental arrangement of desires and incentives, for her the humanities involve an "attempt at an uncoercive rearrangement of desires." She takes this further by arguing that this teaching of the humanities has to be addressed not to the victims of oppression but rather to the "dispensers of bounty."

How do we effect an uncoercive rearrangement of desires in the endgame of the dispensation of bounty? How can these practices be disentangled from the instrumentalism of responsibility and recast in the ethics of accountability? Praxis in the time of empire is the effort to confront these intimate questions of expertise, privilege, and benevolence.

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