

of ethical issues posed by the intersection of several technologies, their institutional formatings, and their deployments through markets and other mechanisms" – in which ethical dilemmas are worked out. At times, he refers to this working out in a "nod" to Clifford Geertz and Jeremy Bentham, as "deep play," which he (31) immediately topologizes (and thereby loses what dynamic the notion may have) as "cultural sites where multiple levels of structure, explanation, and meaning intersect and condense, including the cultural phantasmagoria that ground and structure the terrain on which reason, will, and language operate but cannot contain." Fischer does not elaborate either of these topological equivalents (I presume) of Wittgenstein's "forms of life" at a conceptual level but immediately relates them to particular situations (the "deep play behind Haider's rise in Austria, biotechnologies such as xenotransplantations, and genetic research among the Yanomami). Neither a descriptive ethics nor a flight into particularism, however revealing they may be of moral strategizing, can avoid the problem of ethical relativism that has haunted "anthropological" thought since Montaigne and is implicit in Wittgenstein's notion of "forms of life." We may try to imagine a groundless ethics but ultimately such an ethics, were it possible or even imaginable, would simply mask the (rhetorical) grounding inherent in ethical argument and evaluation or in the justifications of the plays of power and desire that lie behind any decision making.

In a wonderful passage, Fischer contrasts various interpretations of Velázquez's "Las Meninas," with a photograph of the surgeon Ian Hunter ensconced in a robotic and virtual reality eye surgery system that gives him finer perceptual feedback than he would have without the aid of what to the outsider is a dizzying array of screens, computers, and other unidentifiable devices. Velázquez's famous painting of the painter painting himself as painter in his painting of Philip IV's family is understood as an intermediation between a Renaissance and a Cartesian episteme (Foucault), an Italian through-a-window perspective and a Dutch fill-in-the-surface style (Svetlana Alpers) and an isolated Cartesian ego and socially-induced reflective self (Norbert Elias). It marks a moment in the transition to modernity. For Fischer (313), the photograph of Hunter in his MIT lab signals a new positioning or rather transmutation of the subject/ego/self that finds itself "within the structure of multiply and synaesthetically constituted understanding (physiologically, biochemically, psychologically, mechanically) where there is no ego

in a fully sovereign position outside the frame." However revealing the contrast between the painting and the photograph are, the two are not, as Fischer (313, endnote 11) himself recognizes, fully comparable, for the photographer is not immediately depicted in the photo. Despite changes in (the position of) the subject/ego/self, Fischer notes that from an ethical point of view it is not yet outmoded.

The transition from this Cartesian ego has to do with a series of changes that are challenges to the nature of how we think ethically, how we perceive, and how we judge. The autonomous ego is not just a simplification or regulative ideal . . . The dilemma is a serious one: if we abandon the autonomous ego on descriptive grounds, what does this do to the notion of ethical responsibility as a regulative ideal, and who, or what organization, can then be held accountable? (314)

The question is serious, perhaps the most serious Fischer asks, and though he situates it in an "unstable transition" or "oscillation" between "modernist frameworks" and "postmodern conditions of knowledge" he offers no argument for why transitional instability or oscillation will be long-lasting. What moral confidence we find in the autonomous ego may be ephemeral. We may fall back retrogressively on a modernist ego or we may give way to a new fractile ego-like entity ever-immersed in mobile dislocations. *Or*, perhaps so caught are we in our postmodernist enthusiasm that we fail to see how little has changed from an ethical point of view. Despite everything, Hunter seems very much in control in (indeed at the center of) his "robotic and virtual reality eye surgery system."

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