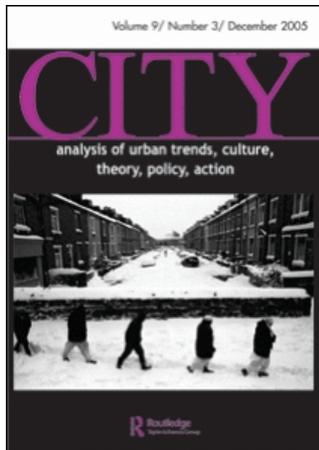


On: 11 November 2007
Access Details: Free Access
Publisher: Routledge
Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954
Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



City

analysis of urban trends, culture, theory, policy, action

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713410570>

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Online Publication Date: 01 April 2007

To cite this Article: Meagher, Sharon M. (2007) 'Philosophy in the streets', City, 11:1, 7 - 20

To link to this article: DOI: 10.1080/13604810701200722

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13604810701200722>

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Philosophy in the streets

Walking the city with Engels and de Certeau

Sharon M. Meagher

Idealistic or bird's-eye views of cities often blind us to the mutual interdependence of philosophy and the city. But there are philosophers who refuse utopian positions in favor of philosophies that are grounded in urban streets. Meagher argues that Engels and de Certeau are two such philosophers, who, taken together, can provide us with an understanding of how philosophy can both offer a normative critique of the city as well as guidelines for resisting social injustices discovered through that critique. Meagher demonstrates how such a reconceptualization of the task of the philosopher can inform our understanding of both cities and philosophy by engaging in a philosophical 'walking tour' of Scranton, Pennsylvania, a small industrial city facing challenges in an age of globalization.

Introduction: overlooking cities,
overlooking philosophy

which has made all this possible.' (Engels,
1971, p. 30)

Michel de Certeau begins his essay, 'Walking in the City', by describing his experience of viewing Manhattan from the 110th floor of the World Trade Center. He recalls his tremendous pleasure in looking down on the city, in 'this pleasure of "seeing the whole" ...' (1984, p. 92). But he quickly recognizes that such a view is distorted: 'To be lifted to the summit of the World Trade Center is to be lifted out of the city's grasp' (p. 92). One hundred forty years earlier, Friedrich Engels describes a similar experience upon his initial arrival in London, as he admires London before he has set foot in it.

'I know nothing more imposing than the view one obtains of the river when sailing from the sea up to London Bridge ... The traveller has good reason to marvel at England's greatness even before he steps on English soil. It is only later that the traveller appreciates the human suffering

Both de Certeau and Engels recognize a problem of viewing the city from above or from a distance. They worry about idealistic views of the city, as such views fail to account for the everyday life and experience of it. And so both aim to correct this problem by taking philosophy down—to the streets.

Neither Engels nor de Certeau are often read as philosophers or by philosophers, yet both can and should play a critical role in a project in which many of the philosophers who contribute to this journal are engaged, namely, in exposing the complex connections between philosophy and the city and in drawing upon philosophical resources in understanding urban phenomena. The fact that Engels and de Certeau are not recognized as philosophers is symptomatic of the need to follow them back to the streets. This process of urbanizing philosophy, of resituating philosophy in the city, is more

than just a matter of thinking about cities from a philosophical point of view. Rather, it is a matter of recuperating and reconstructing the interrelationship between the philosopher and the city so that we can see the relevance of one to the other.

Philosophers often bemoan the fact that their work has been judged irrelevant while at the same time berating other philosophers and political theorists for failing to supply the resources necessary to address urban issues. Marshall Berman, for example, writes:

‘Civic culture was born, in ancient Athens and Jerusalem, when intellectuals took their stand in public spaces, and took it on themselves to act as the consciousness and conscience of their cities. New York intellectuals haven’t done much lately to live up to this legacy.’ (Berman, 1987, p. 428)

But the challenge in living up to this legacy is that we no longer live in a polis, and the conditions that made intellectual life in Ancient Athens possible were, as Berman and many others have pointed out, dependent on the existence of an invisible city of women and slaves that fueled the economic engine of the city.

The result is that contemporary philosophers and political theorists who turn their attention to the city are sometimes suspicious of philosophy’s relationship to the city and often turn to literature rather than philosophy in searching for normative values that can bring meaning to the city. Eduardo Mendieta, for example, in his paper, ‘Invisible Cities’, engages in a phenomenological analysis of the global city in an attempt to uncover the meaning of globalization, particularly from the perspective ‘from below’, that is, from the perspectives of those who share the greatest burdens of globalization (2001b, pp. 11–19). Yet in the end, when Mendieta wants to make normative claims about the meanings he culls from the city, he turns away from philosophy and towards literature and religion as his resources (2001b, pp. 19–23). He argues that a turn to religion is desirable because it restores

respect to a critical resource for oppressed people that has been much maligned by philosophy historically (2001b, p. 9), and there is little to quibble with that.

But in another piece published in the same year, Mendieta (2001a) demonstrates his interest in also reimagining philosophical resources that can provide not only meaning but the critical leverage to demand change, a better life, a good life. And it is this task that I pick up here. Eduardo Mendieta argues that:

‘the fundamental prejudice that orients most, if not all, philosophy [is that] ... philosophy is about thinking the absolute, the universal, in a way that transcends, effaces and erases the traces of the origin and site from which or out of which such thinking is thought. Philosophy, to use an expression of Merleau-Ponty, does not project a shadow, because it is no where.’ (2001a, p. 203)

The view from nowhere is actually often an imaginary view from above, an unconscious vantage point that is projected as nowhere. Mendieta urges us to expose the sites of the production of philosophy, arguing that one of the most important sites is the city (2001a, p. 216, fn. 5).

Yet the prejudice of philosophy as absolute and, as such, located nowhere, causes us often to dismiss philosophy that explicitly and consciously locates itself in the city as *ipso facto* not philosophy. The refusal of assigning the name ‘philosophy’ to critical reflective thought that locates itself in the city covers up the fact that philosophy in the Western tradition has always, albeit in different ways, been parasitic on the city (see 2001a, p. 208). As Mendieta says, ‘philosophy has been most fundamentally determined by the city, and conversely ... the city is related to the project, or production, of philosophy’ (2001a, p. 204).

The interdependence of philosophy and the city was well recognized by Plato’s Socrates. For example, in the *Phaedrus*, Socrates says, ‘I am a lover of learning, and trees and open country won’t teach me anything whereas

men in the town do' (230d). In the *Republic*, Socrates needs to build a city in speech in order to examine the key philosophical Idea of justice (Book II, 368–374). That is, philosophy was born in the city, and yet since Descartes we have often discussed philosophy as if it were never born at all.

In an effort to expose the interrelationship and interdependence of philosophy and the city, Mendieta develops what he calls a 'chronotopology'. The correlation between philosophy and the city has not been obvious and indeed has been refuted more often throughout the history of both than it has been acknowledged (2001b, pp. 206–209). Mendieta focuses on Sartre's parasitic dependence on the city. The relationship of Sartre to Paris is certainly not the same as Socrates' relationship to the polis. Yet such projects suggest that the interdependence of philosophy and the city is a longstanding one that has survived both the changes of cities over time as well as the changes of philosophy and the role of the philosopher over time. While I cannot fully substantiate such a claim in this limited text, the examples of Socrates and Sartre suggest that the representation of one exerts influence over the representation of the other.

Yet the modern philosophical stance of overlooking the city, the insistence on universal ideals not enmeshed in specific time or place, covered over philosophy's urban roots, roots that were buried deeper with the emergence of the nation-state as the most important modern political entity. With the rise of the nation-state, the city became less significant as a place that situated meaning and more an object of study. And as an object of study, the city became the purview of social science. As Henri Lefebvre argues, the shift to positivistic studies of cities was a loss both to philosophy and to cities. Cities, argues Lefebvre are works of art. Science reifies and makes the city into a 'thing', but this is not the only way to look at cities or to live them (1996, pp. 101–103). Social science reinforced the totalizing 'bird's-eye' view of the city by making the city into an object of

study. For both de Certeau (1984, p. 106ff.) and Lefebvre, a rethinking of philosophy and its relation to the city is what is necessary to subvert the totalizing view of the scientific city planner.

Social science so dominates urban theoretical discourse that anyone who engages in it is usually assumed to be a social scientist rather than a philosopher. In their introduction to Henri Lefebvre's *Writings on Cities*, for example, Eleanore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas note that there exists little philosophical reception of Lefebvre, despite his personal characterization of his work as philosophy and the fact that a large part of his *Right to the City* concerns the relationship between philosophy and the city (Kofman and Lebas, 1996, p. 44). In another example, Susan Buck-Morss defends Walter Benjamin's *Passagen-Werk (The Arcades Project)* with a chapter 'Is This Philosophy?' (1989, pp. 216–252).

Although philosophers are now paying attention to Benjamin's work on the city (Pensky, 2005, pp. 205–224), in this paper I return to Benjamin's Marxian roots with a reading of Engels, arguably the first modern philosopher to take philosophy to the streets. It is important to the philosophical project of reconnecting philosophy and the city to reclaim Engels' work in *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844* as philosophy—philosophy that explicitly works from historically specific conditions even while making universal claims.

Engels' analysis offers us important resources for understanding philosophy and the city. He offers a critique of philosophical positions that overlook the city as well as a critique of the social injustices we witness there. But as we shall see, Engels offers us few resources that seem plausible today on how to resist or overcome those social injustices. Michel de Certeau, on the other hand, takes to the city streets to find signs of resistance, and therefore can be fruitfully combined with Engels.

Despite some major discontinuities between globalization and industrialization,

we can and should nevertheless draw on historical philosophical resources such as Engels' analysis of industrial Manchester, England in 1844 in reconstructing an appropriate philosophical response to the city today. Such a reconstruction allows us to see both the continuities as well as the discontinuities between past historical epochs and the age of globalization, both in philosophy and in the city.

After a brief discussion of cities in the age of globalization, I will reconstruct Engels' theory in light of a reading of de Certeau's work and then use it to guide me in a philosophical walking tour of Scranton, Pennsylvania, a city that shares much history with industrial Manchester. Small, post-industrial cities such as Scranton receive scant attention from academics these days (Davis, 2004, p. 1), and yet these are the places where the tensions between an industrial and global post-industrial age really grind. Moreover, a focus on the streets of Scranton and its neighborhoods brings philosophy down from its perch above and reconnects philosophy to the plight of those who are most oppressed.

Philosophy dislocated: the city in the age of globalization

We live in an age of globalization. Whether this age constitutes a radical break from modernity or even postmodernity, industrialization or even post-industrialization remains up for debate; what this age *means* even more so. But what everyone does seem to agree on is that we live in an age of rapid urbanization (Friedman, 2000); for the first time in history, more people live in urban than in rural areas (Mendieta, 2001b, p. 10; MOST Unesco, 2003, pp. 9–10). Moreover, globalization, in the sense of the integration of markets across the globe (Friedman, 2000, p. 9), is clearly a major, if not the sole, cause of the rapid growth of cities (McNeill, 2000, p. 269).

The work of Saskia Sassen (2000, 2002) has put the city at the front and center of

globalization debates (Mendieta, 2001b, p. 8; Davis, 2004, p. 2). Despite the fact that globalization processes are, well, global, the age places new focus on cities not just because of their rapid growth, but because cities provide the locus of globalization forces. As Saskia Sassen argues, globalization cannot be understood from a global perspective, but rather must be understood at the level of the city. 'Large cities in the highly developed world are the places where globalization processes assume concrete, localized forms. These localized forms are, in good part, what globalization is all about' (2000, p. 130). Furthermore, cities are the locus of conflicts between new forces of globalization and older economies, political and power formations, and traditions. 'The global city is a border zone where the old spatialities and temporalities of the national and the new ones of the global digital age engage' (Sassen, 2002, p. 1).

The sustainability of cities as well as the planet is at risk unless we somehow come to terms with the challenges of urbanization (McNeill, 2000, pp. 282–295; UN-HABITAT, 2006). As Eduardo Mendieta argues:

'there is no way in which we can understand what is happening to the world, to our societies, to our environments, to the seas, to the air around the entire planet, and so on, if we do not look at three related factors: the unprecedented concentration of humans in cities, the growth of the human population, and the increase in certain forms of consumption'. (Mendieta, 2001b, p. 10)

Contemporary political philosophers of globalization see a shift in the locus of meaning and power away from the nation-state and towards the global city. Daniel Kemmis, for example, argues that 'The good city—the living city ... provides the context within which global citizenship becomes a genuine possibility' (Kemmis, 1995, p. 147). At the same time that academics bear witness to a new urban global crisis, they also bemoan the loss of the public intellectual, the failure of academe in general to respond to world

crises, and a particular irrelevance on the part of philosophy. This situation will only be exacerbated if philosophers ignore the city in an age where the city and urbanization processes dominate. Yet such a project is not possible through a return to either the pre-globalized city like the polis or a pre-global philosophy (as Kemmis and other communitarians sometimes argue), but rather requires the reimagining of philosophical resources through the dislocation of philosophy from nowhere and its relocation to city streets.

As Mendieta, following Lefebvre claims, 'A representational space always acts as a horizon from which we are allowed to or prevented from surveying our localization in social space' (2001a, p. 206). Both philosophy and urban space have been represented in ways that have prevented the survey of our localization, that is, have prevented us from seeing how philosophy is located in the city, and how our conception of the city is rooted in philosophy.

It may in fact be the very processes of globalization that have caused us to expose those urban roots by shifting spatial representations and our lived experiences of them. The global reach of technology, to cite but one example, has enabled Americans at a McDonald's drive through window in their local city to give an order to an Indian in Bangalore who then routes the order via computer back to the local restaurant. Ironically, as labor and information is uprooted, we finally take notice of its 'original' location. We become increasingly aware that all knowledge, all representation of lived experience, including that of philosophy, has been spatially located and shaped by those locations (cf. Mendieta, 2007, ch. 1). Globalization has dislocated philosophy from its perch in 'no where'.

Cities have moved to the forefront of our imaginations in the globalized world. Mega-urbanization is a chief characteristic of globalization. And, as cities increasingly compete with one another in the world market for international corporate attention and jobs, the threat to localities and thus the

importance of the local becomes clear in a way that was not true during the rise of the nation-state in early modernity.

It is easy for someone like Thomas L. Friedman to fly all over the world and declare that it is flat, that globalization has democratized the world and freed individuals from the particular economic and political context of their respective nation-states (Friedman, 2005). But to view globalization from above causes us to miss the ways in which specific peoples bear the specific burdens of globalization. Women, for example, experience urban spaces and environments differently than do men. Women in the South are particularly more likely to bear the costs of unsustainable urban environments because the sexual division of labor dictates their responsibility for providing for sanitary homes, potable water and safe food for their families (MOST Unesco, 2003, pp. 11–12).

Globalization theorists often have focused only on the biggest cities on the global stage. With the notable exception of many articles in this journal, theorists have tended to ignore small, industrial cities. In contrast to thinkers like Janet Abu-Lughod (1999), Eduardo Mendieta has argued that we need to pay greater attention to cities that have often remained invisible (2001b). Here I extend his suggestion to argue that we also need to look at cities like Manchester, England and Scranton, Pennsylvania that, while once important players in the industrial economy, have become invisible. Just as Diane Davis argued that, in studying so-called 'Third World' cities often left invisible we can see that there are more continuities than discontinuities between industrial and global economies (Davis, 2004), I argue that we can see those tensions more clearly in former powerful industrial cities too.

Engels provides a philosophical model of viewing cities from below that is needed now more than ever. Mendieta argues that such a model is necessary (although he does not draw on Engels), because globalization renders Third World cities invisible to

privileged occupants of First World cities, and further creates invisible cities even 'within the cities that are so visible in most urban theory' (2001b, p. 23). A turn to Engels helps us understand not only the breaks between a manufacturing-based economy and an information-based economy, but also their *continuities* (despite the fact that we often speak of 'globalization' as a complete break with both old economies and old, i.e., 'modern' philosophies).

Streetwalking as an alternative path for philosophy: Engels and de Certeau

Although Friedrich Engels did not describe his philosophy as a view from below, we can read his book *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844* as a paradigmatic example of such a perspective. Engels consciously sought to expose that which remained invisible, unexplored and unexamined, understanding the city from the perspective of the Other while at the same time retaining awareness of his own privilege. In his letter 'To the Working Class of Great Britain', which served as an introduction to the British edition of *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*, Engels writes:

'I have lived long enough amidst you to know something of your circumstances ... I wanted to see you in your own homes, to observe you in your every-day life, to chat with you on your condition and grievances, to witness your struggles against the social and political power of your oppressors. I have done so: I forsook the company and the dinner parties, the port-wine and champagne of the middle-classes and devoted my leisure-hours almost exclusively to the intercourse with the plain Working Men.' (Engels, 1971, p. 7)

While Engels' study often is read today as either a political polemic or as a work of sociology or history, Engels saw it as a philosophical work, an attempt to put a Hegelian

influenced historical materialism into concrete terms (Marcus, 1974, p. 137).

Such a project required Engels to observe the details of the specificity of the conditions of the working class in that particular city (Manchester) and in that particular time (1844), while at the same time understand their dialectical relationship with the universal plight of the oppressed working man. In other words, the observations have *significance* beyond the city limits of Manchester and beyond the timeframe of the early industrial revolution. Engels prefaces his work with a claim to the solidarity of all workers and then opens with a history of England and its process of industrialization.

Engels arrived as a traveler from Germany, sent by his businessman father to learn more about the family trade of cotton manufacturing. But Engels chose instead to take philosophy to the streets. Walking the streets of London and then Manchester, Engels sees beyond his pleasurable but superficial vision of England from his ship on the River Thames. Engels links industrialization irretrievably to the process of urbanization, and thus devotes a good deal of his analysis to 'the great towns', or cities. He describes the city as a place where men and women of all classes and ranks jostle one another in the street but make no actual contact; there's no sense of neighborliness. Moreover, much of what is 'best in human nature' has to be subdued for the city to prosper.

'Here men regard their fellows not as human beings, but as pawns in the struggle for existence. Everyone exploits his neighbor with the result that the stronger tramples the weaker under foot. The strongest of all, a tiny group of capitalists, monopolize everything, while the weakest, who are in the vast majority, succumb to the most abject poverty.' (Engels, 1971, p. 31; cf. Marcus, 1974, p. 145)

Engels' historical account of industrialization is infused with an almost Jeffersonian romanticism for life in pre-industrial England. He claims that the humble rural

workers were able 'to live peacefully side by side with the higher ranks of society. But this meant that they had no intellectual life and were interested solely in their petty private affairs' (pp. 11–12). Engels' assessment of pre-industrial home-based textile workers both idealizes this class as did Jefferson and also condemns them, to use J. S. Mill's phrase, 'as pigs satisfied'.

Engels introduces the Hegelian concept of negativity or otherness into his analysis. He sees the British industrial working class

'as the embodiment of the universal; they are for him, as they were becoming for Marx, the universally negated. As a class of men they had been deprived of everything except their humanity, and even that existed for them in an estranged and unachieved form.

Universally negated, they represented in turn the power of universal negation, and out of this immense and dreadful convulsion there would emerge a final, positive ... what?' (Marcus, 1974, p. 138)

Engels' analysis falters both on the empty process of the final, more positive outcome as well as on the insistence of the necessity of suffering to obtain that outcome. To prove their suffering, Engels requires the documentation of a loss, and such documentation depends on the imagination of 'Die Guten Alten Zeiten' of 'Merry Old England', a romanticized version of a more human rural life. At the same time, Engels insists on the inevitability of the processes of industrialization and urbanization. Engels writes that although the rural English peasants' lives were in some ways idyllic,

'they remained in some respects little better than the beasts of the field. They were not human beings at all, but little more than human machines in the service of a small aristocratic class which had hitherto dominated the life of the country. The Industrial Revolution carried this development to its logical conclusion, turned the workers completely into mere machines and deprived them of the last remnants of independent activity.' (Engels, 1971, p. 12)

The norms against which he measures the suffering and plight of the industrial working class are mired in this romanticized past, even though he also claims that urbanization woke the peasants from their intellectual slumber. But the future that they are to wake up to and recognize is based on a Hegelian logic that requires urbanization and their suffering. In short, Engels validates their suffering as *historically necessary* and offers little hope but to let Hegelian logic do its work. And following Hegel's logic means that Engels also takes a philosophical position that, while powerful in revealing some aspects of the invisible city, fails to consciously understand how this philosophy itself still depends on it.

Nevertheless, Engels' philosophical walking tours of Manchester provide us with invaluable insights into the nature of invisible boundaries and social injustices in that city, and provide us with a model that can be used for uncovering them in other cities. As Engels walked the alleyways of Manchester, he noted that:

'The town itself is peculiarly built, so that someone can live in it for years and travel into it and out of it daily without ever coming into contact with a working-class quarter or even its workers—so long, that is to say, as one confines himself to his business affairs or to strolling about for pleasure.' (p. 54)

But Engels, who came to Manchester as a businessman, did not confine himself in that way. Rather, he explored how cities shield the costs of affluence from the affluent; Engels looked behind the façade to uncover the deeper meanings of the city. He discovered that the class system is built into the very structure of the city. He further exposed what Enrique Dussel much later will call the 'myth of modernity' (1996, pp. 51–52), a philosophical story of progress and development that continues to stymie and stigmatize those who are rendered invisible by the very structure of the city. Engels observed that in cases where the city fails to contain the misery and poverty of the working class in the back alleys of Manchester hidden behind

neat streets of *bürgerlich* storefronts, the bourgeoisie blames the poor for their own condition. Engels exposed the costs of the Enlightenment belief in progress without costs: those who bear the burdens of progress are then also blamed for them. In his essay, 'What is Enlightenment?' Kant begins famously by claiming that the Enlightenment, the modern age, is defined as 'the end of man's self-imposed immaturity'. As Dussel points out, such a claim shifts the burden of progress and development to those who have 'failed' to develop, for it is viewed as a self-imposed 'choice'. But it is a choice that indicates moral failure, a lack of will (Dussel, 1996, pp. 51–52).

Foucault's theory of power also helps us better understand ways in which choices are constrained and yet appear as free choices, and thus how the failures of the poor can be blamed on the poor themselves. But given those constraints, how can those most oppressed by the city overcome or resist that oppression? Neither Marx nor Engels provide us with a blueprint, still leaving it to a Hegelian process of history that trusts that the workers, now able to think philosophically, that is, now enlightened by the extremes of their suffering, will be able to overcome their oppression. Engels' analysis of the social injustices is insightful when he keeps his philosophy on the street, but when he wanders back to Hegelian idealism he returns to a totalizing view of history that leaves little room for resistance. But Michel de Certeau offers us another possibility. De Certeau is interested in what he describes as the 'underside' of Foucault's project, in the sense that he is less interested in the power of the panopticon and more interested in whether and how persons nevertheless can produce moments of resistance (1984, pp. xiv, 96).

De Certeau claims Wittgenstein as his primary philosophical model; from Wittgenstein de Certeau learns how to resist both the call to overthrow philosophy in favor of the expert as well as the temptation to make the philosopher into an expert. Wittgen-

stein's analysis of ordinary language offers a critique of both moves, in that his grounding of philosophy in everyday language refutes the philosophical claim that there exists a special domain of knowledge 'beyond language' to which only the philosopher has access. 'We are subject to, but not identified with, ordinary language. As in the ship of fools, we are embarked, without the possibility of an aerial view or any sort of totalization' (de Certeau, 1984, p. 11). While the scientific method of the expert allows him to forget this fact, philosophers '*think that they dominate it* so that they can authorize themselves to deal with it' (p. 11, emphasis in text). De Certeau argues that Wittgenstein repositions philosophy in the everyday, which allows for exactingness but not false claims to universalism or mastery. The task of the philosopher, then, becomes one of making visible what is often simply assumed and of acknowledging the limits of both language and philosophy. Following Wittgenstein, de Certeau resolves to remain fully within the everyday and brings this understanding of the philosophy of the everyday to analyze ordinary practices as speech acts.

De Certeau argues that speaking, which he identifies with narration, is both an art of operating and an art of thinking. He therefore claims that both theory and practice are embedded in narration or storytelling (p. 77). As such, de Certeau also embraces literature, arguing that novels have 'become the zoo of everyday practices' (p. 78). De Certeau distinguishes narration from mere description, because the former reveals the fictional element of the story. Narration cannot be identified with 'the real'. It is less the thing that is described, but the process of telling that is central to narration.

'Narration does indeed have a content, but it also belongs to the art of making a *coup*: it is a detour by way of a past ("the other day", "in olden days") or by way of a quotation (a "saying", a proverb) made in order to take advantage of an occasion and to modify an equilibrium by taking it by surprise.' (p. 79)

De Certeau's chapter 'Walking in the City' follows his discussion of storytelling, and begins with the story by which I began this paper, namely, by telling his experience of viewing Manhattan from the 110th floor of the World Trade Center. De Certeau's critique of the view from above is aimed much less at philosophy and much more at the scientific planner who has usurped that totalizing role. The danger of such views from above is that those who read the city from above fail to realize that it is only an illusion and instead mistakenly think that they have grasped the whole city. City planners who take such totalizing views overlook practice; they have a theory that they mistakenly think corresponds to total reality, when that totality is itself only a fiction. The visibility obscures everyday life and indeed depends on its obscurity. 'The panorama-city is a "theoretical" (that is, visual) simulacrum, in short a picture, whose condition of possibility is an oblivion and a misunderstanding of practices' (p. 93). De Certeau's solution is to return to the streets, to narrate everyday life and so, to reveal the interdependence of our theories and our practices.

Although de Certeau does not discuss Engels or follow him on the streets of Manchester, we may read de Certeau as picking up where Engels takes off into Hegelian idealism, that is, with the question of revolution or resistance. For de Certeau, resistance is always grounded in the streets, where our wandering is never fully comprehensible or pre-planned nor can it be fully captured or mapped after the fact. De Certeau's urban pedestrian has limited vision, but those limits are what make resistance possible, as the walker cannot be contained by a totalizing vision that he does not share/hold. The walker does not have a panoptic vision and can thus resist panopticism through his or her everyday practices. According to de Certeau, at the level of the street, the walker writes the urban 'text without being able to read it' (p. 93), that is, the pedestrian produces his or her own way of navigating and acting in the city that cannot be fully

anticipated by the expert city planner nor fully captured afterwards by a map or photo or other graphic sign (pp. 97–99). In this sense, the walker resists the city as panopticon, refuses to be captured by the gaze.

De Certeau takes a walk in the city, analyzing what he calls 'pedestrian speech acts'. In doing so, he hopes to reveal moments and opportunities of resistance to those who hold totalizing views of the city. De Certeau's urban walker, his 'everyman', would thus seem to offer hope to those who blindly slave in the invisible city, for de Certeau argues that we all have this ability to produce new paths within the city. But the problem is that de Certeau, in grounding philosophy in the street and refusing to take on the role of expert, also consciously repudiates the task of the philosopher to make normative claims about the city. De Certeau *assumes* that resistance is to be valued, but resistance against what?

Engels can supply that answer. Engels does not allow us to overlook (in any sense of that term) the social injustices of the city. De Certeau focuses on resistance but seems dangerously blind to the sources of oppression that demand resistance. De Certeau ignores the invisible boundaries within the cities that are social, that keep women, for example, from walking city streets for fear of safety, or that ghettoize members of certain races or classes. Engels helps us see those borders and understand the asymmetrical power conditions under which those borders are constructed and enforced.

De Certeau's key operative concept is the 'pedestrian speech act', which he claims has a three-part enunciative function—(1) 'an appropriation of the topographical system'; (2) 'a spatial acting-out of place'; and (3) 'implies *relations* among differentiated positions' (pp. 97–98). Yet despite his recognition of the third function, de Certeau ignores differences in subject position that allow some to navigate the city and act in the city differently. De Certeau claims that pedestrians fill the street 'with the forests of their desires and goals' (de Certeau, 1984, p. xxi),

but what of those whose desires and goals have been damaged by others? What of those who cannot walk the streets at all? De Certeau refuses to offer an explicit critique of power while at the same time pointing to paths of resistance; but this falls far short of the task of the philosopher.

The refusal of the role of philosopher as expert or universal idealist does not entail the refusal to make any sort of normative claims; in fact, it would seem to demand that we make our philosophical ideals and assumptions explicit. And de Certeau cannot escape making normative claims. The very notion of a 'pedestrian speech act' introduces norms insofar as it determines what constitutes the usual characteristics of walking. From this analysis he is able to introduce 'habitability' as a desirable urban characteristic. Since in practice not all persons are allowed to inhabit the city in the same ways (or even at all), the norm of 'habitability' suggests a claim to social justice, a norm of making the city habitable for all. But de Certeau backs away from such norms in favor of an empty value of shaking things up. He endorses Kandinsky's dream of 'a great city built according to all the rules of architecture and then suddenly shaken by a force that defies all calculation' (Kandinsky, 1969, p. 57, cited in de Certeau, 1984, p. 110).

Reading Engels against de Certeau, we see that de Certeau presumes normative standards without identifying them. But unlike Engels, these norms remain grounded in a street-level analysis of everyday life rather than in Hegelian idealism. By bringing the two together we develop a new model of philosophy and the city that unabashedly recognizes the interdependence of philosophy and the city—and this alternative I call 'streetwalking'. Here I walk with María Lugones, who appropriated this term in her own reading of de Certeau (2003, pp. 207–237). While Lugones and I have each adopted the term for different, albeit overlapping purposes, I share Lugones' view that 'street-walker theorizing ... is sustained in the midst of the concrete' and entails 'a practice of

sustained intersubjective attention' (Lugones, 2003, pp. 224, 222). Philosophical streetwalkers, unlike de Certeau's pedestrians, walk in the shoes of the oppressed and develop their critical, normative perspective from that position of situated marginality.

My reconstructive reading of Engels and de Certeau, then, provides us with a model of introducing norms without giving flight to Hegelian philosophy or giving up everyday street life. De Certeau, unlike Engels, offers a way of grounding normative ideals of the city that neither requires suffering as a matter of historical *necessity* nor insists on an ideal grounded in nostalgic loss. But because he refuses to make his normative assumptions explicit, de Certeau empties his ideal to being one of resistance for the sake of resistance and thus appears blind to suffering altogether. We therefore need to read both de Certeau—and small cities—in light of Marxist urbanists like Engels if we are to understand the sources of oppression and social injustice, that is, if we are to view cities from below, or make visible what has long been invisible.

A philosophical walking tour of Scranton, Pennsylvania

So I hit the streets of Scranton and begin my philosophical walking tour of Scranton's hill neighborhood with a copy of Friedrich Engels' *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*. And I tell this story with both de Certeau's idea of storytelling in mind as well as his concept of pedestrian speech acts.

There is some visible difference between the 'upper' and 'lower' hill sections, which denotes both geographic and class location. The external differences are visible—clearly even to residents of the upper hill, who must drive down the hill in order to get to downtown, or pretty much anywhere. The lower hill boasts considerably fewer trees or green spaces and much greater population density because most dwellings are apartments or houses built or converted into multi-family units. I have walked these streets many

times, sometimes with my students who also have read Engels, and all are keenly aware that the two neighborhoods both look and feel different.

But, following Engels, façades do not tell the whole story. The still relatively wholesome façades of the lower hill do not expose the vast demographic differences between the two sections that are measured by income, education, employment and literacy rates. But my students as well as residents of the upper hill often view the ‘blight’ on the lower hill as a symbol of moral deterioration rather than of poverty and lack of opportunity.

My students tend to read the neighborhood as de Certeau does, that is, they view everyday life from their perspectives as highly mobile pedestrians who are not only blind to the totalizing views of the city but also blind to their privilege. I have written elsewhere about front porches and stoops in the neighborhood as particularly contested sites—socializing and ‘happy hour’ activity on the front porches of upper hill homes is seen as evidence of the safety and liveliness of the streets whereas similar activity on front porches in the lower hill is often seen as evidence of the moral decline of the neighborhood and the moral decay of its residents (Meagher, 1999, pp. 75–86). On one walk with my students, we saw a group of men gathered on the porch of a lower hill home, drinking what looked like beer in the late morning. ‘Look at that!’ one of my students exclaimed to me, ‘That’s the problem—they don’t work!’ Others nodded in agreement. But I led my students down other paths. ‘How do you know “they” do not work? Who are “they”? What other possible explanations might there be?’ I asked. One student then suggested, ‘maybe they work nightshift, so morning is really like night to them’. There are multiple readings of that street scene. Armed with Engels, they began to examine beneath appearances.

Yet few of my students (who also tend to live in the lower hill because it borders our campus) and few residents of the upper hill explore those alternatives, alternatives that would allow the possibility of building soli-

arity. Although persons with good manufacturing jobs can and do purchase homes in the upper hill together with white upper-middle-class professionals, thus blurring some of the expected class differences between the two neighborhoods, residents do not usually understand themselves as sharing a common plight, even when both are adversely affected by the decline in manufacturing jobs. When factories first began to close as jobs moved first to the US south and eventually offshore, Scranton promoted itself as a call center locale (and now many of those jobs also are being off-shored to India). Call center jobs never paid well and left skilled manufacturing laborers out.

Scranton currently is taking two roads to development: first, it is courting manufacturing-based industry that cannot be off-shored, namely, the manufactured food industry, where freshness requires manufacture relatively close to the point of consumption. Mission Foods recently opened a large tortilla plant in northeastern Pennsylvania, because its location provides quick access to many markets so that the tortillas will arrive fresh (Falchek, 2005). Once a major seat of US industrial power, Scranton is now the American equivalent of Tijuana and Bangalore, competing with other small cities by providing enormous tax credits to manufacturers and promising a local source of skilled labor willing to work cheaply. Second, Scranton is in hot pursuit of ‘the creative class’, people who can bring their jobs with them through telecommuting and/or artistic production that can be consumed by city and suburban residents looking for ‘city life’ without the perils of traveling to a major city like nearby New York or Philadelphia. Recruitment has focused on raising Scranton’s visibility, but such seems to depend increasingly on rendering poverty invisible so that the creative class will continue to make the upper hill their neighborhood of choice and will gentrify poorer neighborhoods like the lower hill.

All residents of Scranton face increased tax and other financial burdens as they share their

fates with other small cities, like the small Kansas cities of Wichita and Garden City that Thomas Frank describes in his book, *What's the Matter with Kansas?* Frank demonstrates how neo-liberal economic policies place increasing burdens on cities to fend for themselves in global economic competition, bidding to keep or lure jobs from another city with promises of tax dollars and indirect educational and social supports to interested companies (2005, pp. 86–89). Scranton, for example, recently granted enormous tax breaks to Southern Union Company in an attempt to lure them to site their corporate headquarters in Scranton. The corporate offices were never fully relocated, and until recently construction equipment blocked the street in front of the building's unfinished façade. The building stands empty.

These examples reveal both the ways in which Engels' analysis still holds as well as the discontinuities between a manufacturing and a globalized information-based world. What remains constant is that inequities are built into the very fabric of cities, and that those who bear the most burdens are held to be morally suspect for their failure or resistance to develop. Lack of development is, of course, a relative term. As we tour Scranton's lower hill, we see alleys with solid houses, interior plumbing, potable water, heat and sanitary conditions. In a global post-manufacturing economy that Engels could not have foreseen, the worst burdens of poverty have been shifted onto other cities, cities unseen by those in the upper hill on their way to work or in the course of their leisure activities, cities of the so-called 'Third World'. At the same time, the costs of job off-shoring have fallen disproportionately to the working class neighborhoods of Scranton such as the lower hill.

In today's discussions of the global city, smaller cities, including the once grand cities of the industrial era like Manchester, England and Scranton, Pennsylvania often are overlooked in favor of post-industrial global cities like Los Angeles and New York. Engels invites us to reunite philosophy and the city in a way that helps us see the conti-

nunities between industrial and global cities, and also allows us to see how globalization's world urbanization processes have in fact made the world into a Manchester writ large, that is, into a world where whole nations and world regions have become the slums that both provide potential cheap sources of labor and serve as a threat to workers who could be replaced by them. Further, those who benefit most from the existence of such poverty and poor working conditions are shielded from it—no longer tucked in an alleyway, it can now be hidden away in remote nations. The presence of the very poor, ready as reserve workers, continues to keep pressure on existing workers and to divide the working class (Soja, 2000, cf. p. 76ff.).

Yet de Certeau is helpful in reminding us that it also would be a mistake to claim that there is some unified 'view from below'. While tensions between lower hill residents and the new creative class that seeks to buy hill properties cheaply seems fairly clear, there exist further tensions among lower hill residents, especially between those who are nostalgic for their corner 'mom and pop' store and newer working class residents dislocated from their countries of origin, trying to make a place for themselves in Scranton. While both the 'old-time' residents and the newer ones have been displaced by global economic developments, it is difficult for them to see their situations as similar. In fact, the former tend to blame the newer immigrants for stealing 'their' jobs. The Bush administration's stoking of fears of terrorism since 9/11 has helped fuel suspicions of 'strangers' and provides further barriers to building solidarity.

Conclusions

Shortly after the World Trade towers came tumbling down, Marshall Berman wrote:

'A striking feature of New York life after the 9/11 attacks was the hunger of people to find meaning in it. I don't just mean intellectuals,

who live for meaning. I mean a much larger body of everyday people who usually aren't much concerned with history, who are usually willing to let it be.' (Berman, 2003, p. 67)

Berman and others have documented how the destruction of the Twin Towers forced average New Yorkers to find meaning in the streets and public squares of the city. Union Square and other locations spontaneously were converted into make-shift memorials. Large numbers of people have debated what should be built on the site of the towers, and those debates have entailed serious dialogue about both the meaning of the city and city-space (Berman, 2003, p. 67ff.).

And while Berman regularly calls for intellectuals to take their responsibility for meaning building seriously, he gives up on philosophers and turns to literature and the arts to do that work. In both his *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air* (Berman, 1982, chs. 1, 3, 4) and in his regular essays on the city published in *Dissent* (1986, 1997, 2000), Berman repeatedly demonstrates his ability to provide readings of literature, art and popular culture (especially music) to help situate meaning in the city and better help us both understand urban crises and construct possible solutions (particularly in his beloved New York).

Here I have tried to make the case that philosophers must reclaim the excellent philosophical work that has been done at the level of the street. In my reading of Scranton's streets, I have demonstrated that philosophy can be a useful resource in both providing normative ideals necessary to engage in critique and in offering possibilities for change. Henri Lefebvre is supposed to have said, 'Death to philosophy! Long live philosophical thinking!' (Kofman and Lebas, 1996, p. 44). If Lefebvre meant by that that we must let go of totalizing views of philosophy that overlook the city and instead engage in grounded philosophical discussion of them, then I think he is right. The reconstruction of the city and the reconstruction of philosophy are mutually dependent on one another.

Engels and de Certeau share a critique of totalizing philosophy that overlooks the city, but they do not abandon philosophy. Together they offer us an alternative model for thinking about the relationship between philosophy and the city. They show us a path that provides a normative ideal without being hopelessly utopian, one that is grounded in the specific realities of street life in a way that engages the local and the universal in a dialectical relationship without mistaking one term for the other. Such a model is particularly important in this age of globalization, an age in which the city once again shares a global stage and shapes the context of most, if not all, people's lives.

We cannot afford to overlook cities, either in the sense that we take an idealistic view that ignores the realities of city life or in the sense that we forget small urban industrial cities in favor of sexier 'global' ones. While fiction writers, artists and social scientists have played and should continue to play a role in constructing meaning, philosophers also can and must play a role. Such a role cannot simply be a reprise of the philosopher in the early Greek polis who remains blind to the invisible city that supports him. Rather, it requires reimagining philosophy's role by revisiting cities, by walking their streets, by risking the label of 'streetwalker'. The philosopher as streetwalker walks in the shoes of those who are shunned and marginalized and acts as a conscience for the city by questioning oppressive norms *and* by imagining new possibilities.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank members of my panel and the audience who provided me with thoughtful questions and commentary in response to an earlier version of a section of this paper presented at the Urban Affairs Association meeting in Salt Lake City, 16 April 2005. I also thank Eduardo Mendieta and an anonymous reviewer for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this full paper, and Harold W. Baillie, Provost and Academic

Vice-President of The University of Scranton, whose funding of my sabbatical leave made it possible for me to complete this work.

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