

Hossein Mesbajian

# Dieter Misgeld

A Philosopher Against Philosophy

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# Unconventional Figures of the Twentieth Century

**Second Volume:**

**Dieter Misgeld**

*A Philosopher Against Philosophy*

**Hossein Mesbahian**

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## **Contents**

*Series Prologue*

*Synopsis of this volume (An English summary of a Farsi book on Dieter Misgeld)*

*An Application of the Affirmative Functions of Utopia to Dieter Misgeld's Thought.*

*From the Traditional Importance of Philosophy to the Non-Philosophical Importance of Modern World Issues: Vicissitudes in Life and Thought.*

*The Transition from Interest In to Distance From Gadamer: Avant-Garde in Teaching, Conservative in Politics.*

*With Habermas and his Unfinished Project of Modernity*

*Human Dignity, Globalization and the Third World Perspective*

*Americas, Liberation Theology and Emancipatory Politics: On the Necessity to Initiate Dialogue with the Oppressed and the Oppressed World*

## Series Prologue

The *Unconventional Figures of the Twentieth Century* is not simply a collection, since these individuals never assembled in any collectivity nor belonged to any particular community. Rather, the *Unconventional Figures of the Twentieth Century* is a promise, one that history was never able to actualize. We have thus attempted to fulfill this promise with these figures who could not fit within any convention, and therefore remained unknown. They remained unknown because they stood apart from the centre and experienced a different way of life at the margin. They were marginal because they rejected dominant norms and refused to accept the opinions of the elites. Thus, these figures were often neither comprehensible to their societies nor simultaneous with their epoch.

Becoming familiar with these unconventional individuals is a task of great importance: for those who have been torn between the discourses of the ancient era and modern society, and yet standing at this juncture, feel compelled to make a decision; for those who, in the rigidity of totalizing thought see only two alternatives before themselves, and nonetheless resist surrendering to either old or modern forms of violence. Thus, the characters in this anthology shatter existing boundaries, challenge traditional values, disrupt unified models, and reject dichotomous alternatives.

The thought of these characters is an invitation, and their lives a bold provocation. They disrupt all structures and transcend all existing borders. They are characters from a time yet to-come, from a place yet to be imagined, a way of being yet to be realized. This collection is, therefore, an invitation to know these individuals and become familiar with their boldness; to venture in unfamiliar and uncharted territories, to journey along an uneven path that while not requiring a passport invariably requires an unconventional guide. With the help of these figures, we hope to walk even amidst the uneven. The *Unconventional Figures of the Twentieth Century* is a chain of isolated islands; an archipelago which we hope will be created from these exceptional and solitary figures.

February 9, 2005

## **Synopsis of this volume** (*An English summary of a Farsi book on Dieter Misgeld*)<sup>1</sup>

As a newcomer to Canada in 1999, here in part to pursue research on political philosophy, I read countless academic adds, bulletins, and handbooks, hoping to find a supervisor who could most effectively direct me in my areas of interest. It was October 2000 when I first came across Professor Dieter Misgeld's profile in the Bulletin of the University of Toronto. His expertise ranged from hermeneutics, Frankfurt School critical theory, modern German sociology and philosophy, and Human Rights issues, closely paralleling my own areas of interest. There was no doubt that it was he who I was looking for, so I immediately applied to the philosophy program at TPS, OISE/UT. I sent an introductory email to Misgeld, who was also the program coordinator at that time, saying that I had already applied and asked for an appointment to meet him and describing how closely our interests overlapped.

Receiving an admission a few months later enabled me to take my first course with Misgeld in the summer of 2001 and the second later that fall. During these two courses, "Democracy and Education" and "Theories of Modernity and Postmodernity", I realized that I had never before encountered a teacher that was so knowledgeable in their subject area, so up-to-date in their research, and yet at the same time so accessible to students. He possessed a superior knowledge and presented the material very consistently. Furthermore, it was his intention to include students in a systematic discussion of such topics as emancipatory politics and post-colonial discourses; in fact, as the course description described, they were intended to achieve this purpose.

Most importantly, however, I soon realized that he defied all categories: He was political where he should be philosophical, or historical when a political response was expected. He was an unconventional thinker not only due to his life experiences, but also his presentation of these experiences as important for critical reflection by others. His position was atypical: He was not a conventional leftist or radical, yet not at all rightist. He was not a typical secular thinker, yet not an anti-religious Marxist. He was not in any way a typical philosopher or writer, but had a role that would seem strange to many, and difficult to explain to all.

His atypical position became even more apparent to me when I asked him to accept the invitation which he had received from the Iranian "International Centre for Dialogue Among Civilizations."<sup>2</sup> The first question he asked me was if it was useful for Iranian people in their political struggle. He didn't consider the invitation as simply an opportunity to go abroad and expand his CV. This position

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1 This précis is a revised and extended version of a paper originally presented at the celebration in honor of Dieter Misgeld on the occasion of his Retirement at the University of Toronto. Although he had been tenured beginning in July 2003, the event was held on Friday, February 25, 2005. I am deeply thankful to my friend, Trevor Norris, for his editorial improvements and insightful discussion. This paper would not have come into existence without his great help.

2 In response to the proposal made by the president of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the United Nations' General Assembly declared 2001 as the year of Dialogue Among Civilizations. The Iranian government subsequently founded the International Centre for Dialogue Among Civilizations (ICDAC) in February 1999. ICDAC is primarily an organization intended to promote the concept of a global structure based on mutual understanding and tolerance. For more information about the center see its official website: <http://www.dialoguecentre.org>, (Accessed July 21, 2005). Misgeld participated in an international seminar on "Centre and Periphery" organized by ICDAC's Department of Philosophy May 1-2, 2002, in Isfahan, Iran. Twenty one lectures (8 by Iranian thinkers) were delivered during the two day event. Participants came from a variety of countries including the U.S., and speakers included Fred Dallmayr, Mahmood Dolatabadi, Daryoosh Shayegan.

was also clearly articulated in his comments on an academic visit to Iran, published in “TPS Quarterly” under the title *Zarathustra’s Land Beyond Good and Evil*. He says there that “[h]esitating initially due to my doubts about the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 (and knowing that it had been extremely brutal in its aftermath), I accepted the invitation after President Bush’s speech mentioning Iran as belonging to the ‘Axis of Evil’”.<sup>3</sup> This revealed something significant to me about his own political inclinations.

Acknowledging these sorts of political concerns and other dimensions of his thought, I decided to introduce him to Iranian intellectuals and students by writing about him, translating his articles, and interviewing him about world political and philosophical issues. A majority of Iranian intellectuals were and still are somewhat enamored with Western thought, an affection which led to a desire to hear more about the crisis (and even decline) of Western civilization, particularly from the perspective of a Western thinker. The decision was clear for me when I took more courses with him, wrote my MA thesis on Paul Ricoeur under his supervision, and consequently enjoyed the opportunity to come to know him more deeply. When I spoke about my plan with Misgeld, he commented modestly that it was not necessary “because I am not a great philosopher, I am just a teacher.” I, however, wasn’t in fact looking for a renowned philosopher; I was looking for someone whose thought could help transform the dominant Iranian intellectual atmosphere. I continued to insist, and he finally agreed to give me his own written archive and to be interviewed.

Based on his books, articles and CV, I wrote an article entitled “*Dieter Misgeld and the Third kind of Utopia*”, and also translated his article “*The Distinctiveness of Europe: Reflections on some Writings by Gadamer*”. These two articles were published in a well known monthly cultural magazine prior to his trip to Iran.<sup>4</sup> However, the magazine was later shut down by the judiciary system of Iran in February of 2002. I then interviewed him for about six hours concerning his experiences at Heidelberg University, his familiarity with Gadamer, his thoughts on modernity and encounters with Habermas, and perhaps most provocatively, his gradual shift from philosophy to emancipatory political theories such as liberation theology, political issues such as human rights, and political experiences in Latin America. I later translated four papers written by him on modernity, human rights, dialogue among cultures, and lastly his comments and reflections following his visit to Iran.

Having described how I came to know Dieter Misgeld, for the remainder of the introduction I will outline the organization of this book, which closely parallels his unconventional life-narrative and intellectual transitions. Although I soon had sufficient materials to undertake a book on this extraordinary thinker, two problems emerged: understanding several new concepts and names which he used in the interview, and organizing the materials for a book in a clear and consistent way. The first problem was eliminated by asking him repeatedly during the next four courses that I had with him during 2002 and 2003. The second problem was resolved by examining a book on Gadamer he co-

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3 Dieter Misgeld, “Zarathustra’s Land Beyond Good and Evil”, *TPS Quarterly*, (3) IV (July 2002): 3.

4 Hossein Mesbahian. “Dieter Misgeld and the Third Kind of Utopia,” *Aftab Magazine*, No. 15, Tehran, Ordibehesht 81 (February 2001): 80- 84. Dieter Misgeld. “The Distinctiveness of Europe, the *Geisteswissenschaften* and a Global Society: Reflections on some Recent Writings by Hans-Georg Gadamer”, translated by Hossein Mesbahian, *Aftab Magazine*, No. 15, Ordibehesht 81 (February, 2001): 84-90

authored with Graeme Nicholson.<sup>5</sup> The book consists of three parts, each starting with an interview followed by several essays written by Gadamer. Inspired by this organizational structure, I divided the material into five chapters: *Life and Works*, *Gadamer and Hermeneutics*, *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity*, *Human Rights and Globalization*, and finally *Dialogue with non-Western Cultures*, this last chapter is concerned with progressive cultures such as Latin America and its influential liberation theology.

The main task of the first chapter is to draw a picture of the life and work of such an extraordinary thinker, and to articulate his thought in specific concepts which can best represent his main philosophical perspective on world issues. This chapter begins with my own article on Misgeld entitled *An Application of the Affirmative Functions of Utopia to Dieter Misgeld's Thought*. Despite the fact that "Utopia" literally means "no place",<sup>6</sup> and that Misgeld doesn't consider his own project of emancipatory politics to be at all utopian-- and does not even like to use the word 'utopia'-- I retained the word in the title because I have a very positive notion of utopia in mind. I will speak more about the use of the word of 'utopia' in this context.

The title for my article came while completing my thesis titled *Paul Ricoeur's Conceptions of Ideology and its Correlation with Utopia*. According to Ricoeur, three contrasting functions of utopia can be grasped from the phenomenological examination of the word. First, a utopia contains an element of fancy or fantasy that suggests it is "completely unrealizable." As Ricoeur says, "Fancy borders on madness. It is escapism and is exemplified by the flight in literature."<sup>7</sup> Second, a utopia advances an alternative to power or an alternate form of power that would be more humane and less hierarchical than its current form. Third, in Ricoeur's words, the "best function of utopia is the exploration of the possible."<sup>8</sup> Although this function may clash with the utopian element of fancy or fantasy, a society without a utopia is a dead society. We cannot live in the present without a dream for the future. Thus, "a utopia is not only a dream but a dream that wants to be realized. It directs itself toward reality; it shatters reality."<sup>9</sup>

Taking this third and more affirmative conception of utopia into consideration, I realized that Misgeld's pedagogy of hope has the same function of positively describing utopia as "the exploration of the possible". This function has clearly been articulated by Misgeld, to give one example, in his Human Rights course description, which begins with the sentence "[i]n recent times, hopes of many, sometimes millions of people, have been attached to the defense of human rights." However, the

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5 Dieter Misgeld & Graeme Nicholson (editors), *Hans-Georg Gadamer on Education, Poetry, and History: Applied Hermeneutics*. Monica Reuss, Lawrence Schmidt (translators), (Albany: State University of New York Press: Albany, 1992).

6 The term "Utopia" was coined by Thomas More as the title of his Latin book *De Optimo Reipublicae Statu deque Nova Insula Utopia* (circa 1516), known more commonly as *Utopia*. He created the word to simultaneously suggest two Greek neologisms: outopia (no place) and eutopia (good place). In this original context, the word carried none of the modern connotations associated with it. The book is available in English online at: <http://www.apostles.com/utopia.html>. Accessed July 21, 2005.

7 Paul Ricoeur. *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, ed. G. H. Taylor (New York: Columbia University Press. 1986): 310.

8 Ibid.

9 Paul Ricoeur. *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 289.

current version of Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR afterward) and the governmental claims to defend human rights are not able to provide a sufficient response to that hope. The realization of human rights world-wide, accordingly, “would have required the strengthening and reform of the United Nations’ system as well as a ground-swell of support, carried by large peoples’ movements, oriented toward the realization of global social justice and universal wellbeing...”<sup>10</sup> But aren’t these utopian wishes? Aren’t these far from being realized? Misgeld admits that “none of this happened. None of this is happening. Instead we face a campaign which produces terror and uses terrorist means in order to fight terror (so it claims). We are confronted with horrendously expensive schemes for arms production; and the demolition and suppression of democratic liberties is proceeding rapidly. Thus the human rights situations as well as the hopes for global democracy are becoming dimmer by the day... We have to fear a level of brutalization in domestic and international politics which has not existed for decades. Therefore, a profound change of perspective is required.”<sup>11</sup>

The profound change, highlighted in almost all of Misgeld’s writings, seems to be utopian and impossible to be realized. But as Derrida says, “an impossibility that is not the opposite of the possible. We must do the impossible; we must do and think the impossible. If only the possible happened, nothing more would happen. If I only did what I can do, I wouldn’t do anything.”<sup>12</sup> If Misgeld’s perspective is a utopian one and if he himself is an unconventional thinker, the most effective route to follow in the second section of the first chapter was to explore the educational, political, and philosophical roots shaping an unconventional personality by asking some questions about his life and work. This section consists of an interview with Misgeld entitled *From the Traditional Importance of Philosophy to the Non-Philosophical Importance of Modern World Issues: Vicissitudes in Life and Thought*. Its task is to explore his philosophical and political background by asking some questions about his philosophical education at Heidelberg University, his dissertation on Heidegger (supervised by Gadamer)<sup>13</sup>, his seminar discussions with Habermas, his more than three decades of teaching experiences in Canada at the University of Toronto, and his comparative examination of European and Canadian universities regarding their social and political environments. The most interesting and lively passage, revealing once again his provocative position, was his description of the role of philosophy. Despite his profound knowledge and background, he argued that philosophy is no longer helpful for social and political change. Misgeld thinks that the problems of the world today are of political rather than philosophical importance, that the world is in a political rather than philosophical crisis. Thus, it is politics rather than philosophy that is helpful. His simple words were deeply thought provoking: “I don’t think a philosophy is in a position to know what we are, but

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10 Dieter Misgeld. Course Syllabus, POL 412Y, Academic year 2004/05.

11 Ibid.

12 Ulrich Raulff, “No One Is Innocent: A Discussion with Jacques Derrida about Philosophy in the Face of Terror,” Trans: Samuel Butler, 24 September 2001, <http://www.watsoninstitute.org/infopeace/911/index.cfm?id=5#>. Accessed July 21, 2005.

13 Misgeld mentioned in the interview that he went to Heidelberg University because he was looking for someone who could best represent to him Heideggerian thinking. He said that he could choose between two or three places in Germany where prominent students of Heidegger taught. In Heidelberg, there were two students of Heidegger, Gadamer and Karl Lowith, that attracted him. He found Karl Lowith “not very communicative” and thus stayed with Gadamer. Misgeld’s dissertation was an examination of guilt and conscience in Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, contrasted with Kantian ethics, and Heidegger’s significantly different perspective of ontology among German Idealists from Kant to Hegel.

we are in the position to know what has to be made.”<sup>14</sup> Remarkably, he asserts that he has come to this conclusion via philosophy itself. Since I would argue that the only way to overcome social and political problems is via philosophical approaches, that passage is quite challenging.

Although, Misgeld is unfortunately no longer interested in philosophy and is now concerned primarily with issues of human rights, he, once a student of Gadamer’s, is the most capable person in hermeneutics and the philosophical aspects of the modern world I’ve encountered in philosophy. The second chapter has thus been devoted to hermeneutics and its main theorist, Hans-Georg Gadamer. The chapter entitled: *The Transition from Interest In to Distance From Gadamer: Avant-Garde in Teaching, Conservative in Politics*, includes an interview concerning Gadamer’s thought. The interview contains some problematic aspects of Gadamer’s thought: what happens subjectively when an individual engages in the act of reading, the objective meaning in reading, Gadamer’s will to give up objective meaning entirely, as some of his critics have claimed. In addition to these seemingly abstract issues, the main part of this section has been devoted to Misgeld’s own essays on Gadamer and hermeneutics in general,<sup>15</sup> and in particular the debate around his contribution to a published collection of essays on Gadamer’s work, *Festivals of Interpretation*.<sup>16</sup>

Misgeld stated in his contribution to that volume that “Gadamer takes a strongly antiutopian position, which includes the rejection of emancipatory politics as a real possibility of social transformation.”<sup>17</sup> Therefore, his political position is thought to be deeply conservative. In his article, *Is Hermeneutics Necessarily Conservative?*<sup>18</sup>, G. B. Madison critically responded to Misgeld, arguing that this is not a fair assessment. He acknowledges that while Misgeld does clearly show that “Gadamer takes a strongly anti-utopia position, Madison continues, asking if Gadamer’s anti-utopianism necessarily makes him a ‘conservative’.<sup>19</sup> Misgeld’s response to Madison in the interview was simple and concise: “My difference with Madison already emerges when you look at the title of his essay. I would never use the phrase ‘necessarily’. If he means to ask if hermeneutics is conservative, no, it’s not and nor is Gadamer’s.”<sup>20</sup> He goes on to add that there is not a correlation between anti-utopianism and the

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14 From my interviews with Dieter Misgeld on April 1 and 3, 2002, (hereafter, “from the interview”).

15 I am referring to the following essays: Dieter Misgeld. "Modernity and Hermeneutics: A Critical Theoretical Rejoinder." In: H. Silverman (ed.), *Gadamer and Hermeneutics*. (NY: Routledge, 1991): 163-181. Dieter Misgeld "Critical Theory and Hermeneutics. The Debate between Habermas and Gadamer." In: J. O'Neill (ed.), *On Critical Theory*, (NY: Universities Press of America, 1989): 164-183. Dieter Misgeld. "On Gadamer's Hermeneutics." In: *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, (9) 2, (1979): 221-240. Dieter Misgeld. "Discourse and Conversation: The Theory of Communicative Competence and Hermeneutics in the Light of Debate between Gadamer and Habermas." In: *Cultural Hermeneutics*, (4) 4 (1977): 321-344.

16 Dieter Misgeld. "Poetry, Dialogue and Negotiation: Liberal Culture and Conservative Politics in Hans-Georg Gadamer's Thought." In: K. Wright (ed.), *Festival of Interpretations (Essays on Hans-Georg Gadamer's work)*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990).

17 Ibid. p.170

18G. B. Madison.“Is Hermeneutics Necessarily Conservative?” <http://www.ualberta.ca/~di/csh/csh10/Madison.html>. Accessed July 21, 2005.

19 Ibid.

20From the interview.

rejection of emancipatory politics as a real possibility of social transformation. Misgeld asserts that he neither argued that hermeneutics was necessarily conservative nor that Gadamer's anti-utopianism necessarily made him a conservative. "What I was arguing there was that Gadamer's understanding of politics is deeply conservative, in the sense that he has tremendous doubts about our capacity to change and a major change such as has happened in the formation of European modernity can be extremely risky. To him, every major change can only be failed."<sup>21</sup>

Misgeld also referred to an interview he and Graeme Nicholson conducted with Gadamer in July 1986, in which Gadamer eloquently expressed his attitude toward politics, saying "[T]he only available choice is between one evil and another. Prudently choosing means to choose the lesser evil."<sup>22</sup> Misgeld's interpretation of Gadamer's political position has been insightfully articulated in his article *Modernity, Democracy and Social Engineering*.<sup>23</sup> In referring to Richard Bernstein's assertion that during the last twenty years Gadamer has become increasingly radical, Misgeld asserts that "Bernstein is mistaken. Gadamer is only radical in his insistence on moderation...[D]espite Gadamer's endorsement of freedom as a principle there is no indication that he (a) appreciates or could even begin to advocate processes of democratization, no matter how reasonably such projects are put forward, that (b), he has a grasp of modern political history, a history also formed by emancipatory social movements, and (c), that he has even given credit to social democracy in Germany as the major force defending liberal democracy before the Nazis. As far as I can see, he has never accepted the overcoming of structures of domination as a central political project for the future."<sup>24</sup>

This said, it doesn't necessarily follow that Misgeld lacks admiration for Gadamer. Misgeld's perspective on Gadamer suggests that there is not necessarily an antagonistic relationship between becoming impressed by a mentor and at the same time criticizing some aspects of his thought. Misgeld remembered Gadamer as the professor whose door was always open to students, as the one who joined them in many discussions, and made philosophy an unforgettable experience. "I always stress that we, as academic teachers here, can never have the influence on students that someone like Gadamer had on myself and many others."<sup>25</sup> By mentioning the names of thinkers such as Karl Lowith, Van der Meulen and Carl-Friedrich Graumann, which were the most influential teachers for him, Misgeld added immediately that "there is no one equal to Gadamer for me...[W]ith Gadamer, one grew into a very old world. When Gadamer died, a German academic wrote that we have lost a philosopher who was a living memory of our past."<sup>26</sup>

Although Misgeld was never a student of Habermas, and his connection with him was formed when he was already teaching in Canada, he has written numerous essays on several dimensions of

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21 From the interview.

22 From the interview.

23 Dieter Misgeld. "Modernity, Democracy, and Social Engineering." *Praxis International*. New York, Oxford, Zagreb, (7) 3/4 (1987/88).

24 Ibid, 283-284.

25 From the interview.

26 From the interview.

Habermas's thought, both critically and admiringly. Furthermore, he has taught critical theory and theories of modernity and postmodernity at the University of Toronto for many years. For these reasons, the following third chapter, entitled *With Habermas and his Unfinished Project of Modernity* is devoted to Habermas's thoughts in general and modernity as one of his main concerns in particular. Structured as an interview, this chapter is concerned with the historical roots of modernity, the Hegelian philosophical conception of modernity in terms of subjectivity, Habermas's viewpoints on the notion of subjectivity, the supposed oppositional relationship between human subjectivity and the name of God (tied since the end of the eighteenth century to the principle of emancipation), and Adorno's conception of the "Name of God".<sup>27</sup>

Iran's intellectual encounter with modernity constitutes another major theme of this section. Misgeld presents entirely new and unique approaches in response to several questions, ranging from the universality of modernity, the possibility of the international overcoming of modernity (as some Iranian intellectuals have claimed), the non-Western varieties of modernity, the relationship between secularism and Westernization, and the possibility of selective philosophical borrowing from the West. He mentioned that modernity is a Western phenomenon with a specific historical background, and can therefore not be easily applied to other parts of the world. "When people think about modernity in Iran, for example, with every way they will make use of Western philosophies, they should study them in their larger intellectual culture. I hate to say this, because I don't want to lecture anyone. You do what you do, but my sense would be, if I was there, I would say what the historical situation in Europe is, such that these thoughts [such as philosophical foundations of modernity] arise there and play a role there."<sup>28</sup> He emphasized that we shouldn't reduce modernity to its philosophical foundation and such philosophical notions like subjectivity. Even to understand the philosophical foundation of modernity, we should pay attention to its historical situation and to what was happening besides philosophy at the time in Europe. So, the question is what happened with us such that we have an interest in philosophical questions about modernity. Second, with respect to European history, it is a mistake to isolate thoughts and ideas from their political and social processes. "They come hand in hand. Whether we think of Kant or we think of the French materialists or whether we think of the intellectuals of the French revolution, or whether we think of Hegel and then Marx<sup>29</sup>, one sees that in every case there are political and social processes that happen at the same time to which they were responding."<sup>30</sup>

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27 The question regarding Adorno was based on David Kaufmann's article "Adorno and the name of God", <http://www.flashpointmag.com/adorno.htm>. Accessed July 21, 2005. He is investigating the question of why it is that Theodor Adorno—aberrant Marxist, Left Hegelian par excellence, close reader and follower of Nietzsche—should insist on using blatantly religious tropes throughout his career. I asked Misgeld if we can say that Adorno uses the Name of God as a model for a philosophy that understands the historical conditions that constrain it and the human needs that render it necessary. He replied no, not at all, adding that he became surprised when he heard from me that some people like Robert Hullot-Kentor, the translator of Adorno's Kierkegaard, claims that "theology is always moving right under the surface of all Adorno's writings", and that "theology penetrates every word" of his work. Theodor W. Adorno, *Kierkegaard: Construction of the Aesthetic*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1989), xi.

28 From the interview.

29 From the interview. Misgeld emphasized that there is no point in talking about Hegel if one doesn't also talk about Marx.

30 From the interview.

Misgeld's areas of interest and his involvements in philosophical and political issues are not limited to the previously discussed topics. He has taught and written extensively about human rights, globalization, and dialogue among cultures. Thus, the next two chapters have been devoted to these and related issues. The fourth chapter, entitled *Human Dignity, Human Rights and Global Justice*, contains an interview entitled *Human Dignity, Globalization and the Third World Perspective*, concerned with questions regarding the essence of human rights (namely human dignity), globalization as a problematic notion and its two opposite sides (from above and from below<sup>31</sup>), and the nature of the Third World perspective. The most significant part of this section is the words he uses to express his feelings about the hazardous situation of the world in our day: "whenever I think of the global situation, I get quite anxious...we may face something quite vicious for some time."<sup>32</sup>

Misgeld referred to various aspects of globalization which are profoundly harmful, such as the neglect of the interests of poorer nations and the working class, the promotion of a corporatist agenda intent on constricting the freedoms of individuals in the name of profit, the flow of savings into the United States rather than developing nations, and the imperialistic aspect of globalization- one of the driving reasons behind the Iraq war. Misgeld also referred to the broad antiglobalization movement which includes national liberation factions, left-wing parties, environmentalist, anti-racism groups, and libertarian socialists. While reformist groups are arguing for a more humane form of capitalism, Misgeld argues more radically for a more humane system than capitalism. While many such as Noam Chomsky have decried the lack of unity and direction in the antiglobalization movement, Misgeld believes that this lack of centralization may in fact be a strength.

The fifth and last chapter, *Americas, Liberation Theology and Emancipatory Politics : On the Necessity to initiate Dialogue with the Oppressed and the Oppressed World*, includes an interview concerned with questions about the non-Western tradition of progressive thought in general and liberation theology in particular. Taking Misgeld's knowledge and experience with Latin America into consideration, the major part of this interview has been devoted to liberation theology as a religious response to social problems, particularly its past, present and future, and its central thinkers. Here, the reader of the interview will see another unexpected dimension of this secular thinker: "I am not a theologian and I do not share the religious commitment that the liberation theologians have. I very much appreciate that I can share the human commitment they have... Liberation theology can be considered a different, you might say, modernity which does not follow the secular assumptions of the liberal West, which I have found very interesting about liberation theology."<sup>33</sup>

In closing, this summary cannot come to an end without expressing its author's gratitude to his unconventional teacher, Dieter Misgeld. He encouraged me to be myself, trust my intuition above all

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31 Here I am referring to Richard Falk's division of globalization, in: Richard Falk, "Cultural Foundations for the International Protection of Human Rights," in Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im, (ed). *Human Rights in Cross-Cultural Perspectives: A Quest for Consensus* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), 48.

32 From the interview.

33 From the interview.

else, and find my own individual path. He encouraged me to seek enlightenment and shed whatever impediments that keep me from being free. Sometimes I felt that he may have sent me in the wrong direction or presented an unexpected perspective so as to provoke me to reconsider my own philosophical assumptions. He is the teacher of hope, vision, and creativity, who seeks to teach through paradox, like the riddles of Confucius. He tried always not to give me answers but compelled me to think on my own. It was inspirational to have had such an unconventional figure teach something for which he had such passion. Besides his significant impact on my own thought, his perspective on the world's philosophical and political issues presents an exciting and new cross-cultural perspective that should be broadly engaged. Misgeld says of Gadamer that "with him we grew into a very old world." Yet with Misgeld just as we grow into the world of philosophy we are expelled into the turmoil and troubles of the present international global political system. Misgeld's thought resonates with truth, wisdom and inspiration, and also offers a refreshing perspective on human values and lives. May this book inspire the reader as much as Misgeld inspired its author.

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