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The Future of
Character

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For some time now, a particular strand of sociological literature has emphasized the difficulties faced by modern man in formulating a coherent image of the Self - a cumulative biographical narrative in which consistency outweighs disruption; in which experience has moulded a set of values adhered to individually and reaffirmed socially in word and action. A narrative that gives shape to a person, so that others may form expectations of reasonable solidity - in short, an account of character.¹

To formulate such an account is said to have become difficult if not impossible today. Though nuanced, the different diagnoses offered for this phenomenon all stress the vicissitudes of work-life in modern capitalism as one of the main contributing factors. The ubiquitous creed of flexibility – in the demand for geographical and occupational mobility just as much as in the organization of work processes themselves – requires social relations that are manifold, yet loose and temporary in nature. The informal and mutual trust characterising strong interpersonal

relations seems to require far too much time to develop.

Time, we no longer have.

Instead, present modes of work replace such relations with networks of many weak ties, each of which to be severed almost

instantly whenever opportunity knocks or crisis looms. As a corollary to this, loyalty and commitment are weakened; and countless personnel management publications on how to reinvigorate these values in organizations only testify to their decline.

The Future of Character

Titelbild:
www.trinkwasser.de

¹ See among many:

Richard Sennett,
*The Corrosion of
Character* (1998)

Anthony Giddens,
*Modernity and
Self-Identity. Self and
Society in the Late
Modern Age* (1991)

Zygmunt Bauman,
Liquid Modernity
(2000)

² Sennett, *Corrosion*,
p. 26

Changes in work-life are also said to profoundly affect social relations in general. This goes far beyond the more obvious impact frequent job changes, family relocations or career setbacks have on personal friendships, on local communities and neighbourhoods. Even family life and the education of children may be affected by a spill-over of the values – or indeed the lack thereof – characterizing the low wage labour market as well as the corporate world of semi-autonomous teamwork organizations. The task of passing onto the next generation a set of virtues such as trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship – the “Six Pillars” of so-called character-education programmes in US schools – may justifiably be assigned to a rule-bound education system; the real-life work experience of parents no longer uniquely qualifies them as role-models. The “chameleon” qualities needed for success or at least survival in the new economy stand in opposition to lasting virtues.² Here, it seems to make little difference if the parental experience in question is one of insecurity and subjection as a single-parent executing multiple jobs in the ranks of the working poor, or that of flexibility, drift and risk as a dual career couple navigating the corporate world.

Yet, in what is an almost paradoxical turn, it appears that while character formation is threatened by discontinuities and change that lie beyond the individual's control, all eyes remain firmly fixed on the individual rather than on the forces of disruption. In the narrow sense, this holds true, for example, for political debates about welfare-state reform, in which individual responsibility and the associated call for self-reliance are the dominant tropes. But what may at a glance appear but a rhetorical figure in the ongoing attempts to re-define the limits of solidarity is in fact part of a larger phenomenon. The Self's responsibility cannot be fully discharged by accepting the consequences of one's actions and choices. Although the narrative may well function as a "biographical solution to systemic contradictions"³, this is only part of its remit: Comprehensively, the Self has become responsible for it-self.

Though the obligation to improve and perfect one's character and the associated demand for coherence and authenticity have a long and distinguished cultural history, it was the psychological revolution of the 20th century that profoundly altered the way in which this responsibility is being formulated. To take but one enduring example of the wide variety of psychological concepts that have entered our everyday language: Self-realization, or better: self-actualization – the idea, that the most refined of human needs consists in achieving one's fullest potential⁴ – has long left the realm of personality psychology. First, the concept entered organisational behaviour theory and was seen as the prime motivational tool for personnel managers. With its further popularisation – now visible on the shelves of every bookstore's self-help section, in TV-shows, in autobiographical literature of celebrities and managers, as well as in the many esoteric offerings for self-improvement – it has changed status from a psychological need of the few to a duty of everyone.

Self-realization has become a duty precisely because of its universal applicability and its democratic availability. If everyone can "re-invent themselves", "repack their bags", "deal themselves the best cards in life" or even "think themselves rich, thin or loved"⁵, then those who fail to do so have only themselves to blame. Unless, of course, they do come up with a convincing account of the factors that have prevented the success of their reinventing, repacking, dealing or thinking. And there is no opting out, because self-actualization is categorically a public duty; one that cannot be discharged in the privacy of one's own soul.⁶ Mandatory self-presentation has become a defining feature of the role of the individual in mass culture, with the effect, that life stories are subject to laws of competition governing the "economy of attention".⁷ It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that the concept of individuality has come to also include a demand for originality. The narrative of the Self must now follow the dictates of excitement, of extraordinary achievement, of terrible tragedy or blinding glory. To be normal or dull is no longer an option. The Self therefore faces a double-bind: character is corroding, but personality must be revealed. Whilst the Self is fragmentary, ephemeral and nebulous, it must nevertheless be fully developed, realized, actualized, and presented with verve. How then do individuals respond to the double-bind of inability and obligation? A number of possible, perhaps even typical responses have been identified and may help to frame the problem of the Future of Character.

3 Ulrich Beck, *Risikogesellschaft. Auf dem Weg in eine andere Moderne* (1986)

4 See Abraham Maslow, *Motivation and Personality* (1987) expanding on his 1943 paper *A Theory of Human Motivation*

5 Allusions to popular titles in the self-help literature genre:

Steve Chandler, *Reinventing Yourself: How To Become The Person You've Always Wanted To Be* (2005)

Richard J. Leider and David A. Shapiro, *Repacking Your Bags* (2002)

Cyndi Maxey and Jill Bremer, *It's Your Move: Dealing Yourself the Best Cards in Life and Work* (2003)

Joseph Murphy and Ian McMahan, *Think Yourself Rich* (2001)

Debbie Johnson, *Think Yourself Thin* (1996) and *Think Yourself Loved* (1999) by the same author.

6 It is no accident that Dieter Thomä's *Erzähle Dich Selbst* (1998) takes the grammatical form of an imperative

7 Georg Franck: *Ökonomie der Aufmerksamkeit* (1998)

The first such response consists in a **simple reaffirmation** of timeless, character-forming values that are held to remain unaffected, however much life has become risky, contingent, incoherent and fragmentary. A most impressive display of this reaction is Richard Sennett's "Rico" - the restless manager turned business consultant, the frequent flyer and flexible careerist - when contemplating his role as husband and father. Though accepting, at times even welcoming the vicissitudes in his work-life as challenges to be met, the ethical values he holds and seeks to pass on in his parental role are those of a "cultural conservative": positive qualities like "loyalty, commitment, purpose, and resolution" are complemented by a strong emphasis on self-reliance and -responsibility, mirrored by a disdain for those who do not or cannot take charge of their lives. Yet, as a consequence of the reaffirmation of those values, the language used by "Rico" to describe himself and the ruptures in his biography necessarily require him to accept responsibility for events beyond his control - a dilemma for which, in Sennett's words, "there exists no practical remedy", leaving the Self confused.⁸

8 Sennett, *Corrosion*, pp. 27-31

The persistence of this dilemma may be one way of understanding a second response that sees reaffirmation slide into **dogmatic insistence** on a specific set of values a good character must possess. The potency of this fundamentalist resolution of the dilemma is most vividly demonstrated in the respective interviews included in Robert Jay Lifton's study on the "Protean Self". The experience of fragmentation and loss of control is countered by guidelines that insist on "simple antitheses", the "polarization of all experience ... into that which is not only right but absolutely necessary for the self, and that which is not only wrong but absolutely incumbent upon the self to reject and condemn".⁹ As in every closed system of thought, even those events or troubling experiences that remain beyond the individual's control can be incorporated, by way of reinterpreting them as part of a great plan devised by high ordeal. If reaffirmation of values can be regarded as a posture of half-hearted denial of the existence of the dilemma, the dogmatic insistence on such values by the fundamentalist Self is essentially an immunizing strategy.

9 Robert Jay Lifton, *The Protean Self: Human Resilience in an Age of Fragmentation* (1993), p. 168

Luckily, most people still prove immune to such immunization; yet that does not necessarily leave them better off. A third response to the dilemma created by the experience of fragmentation on the one hand, and the obligation for self-realization and authenticity on the other, consists in a **complete surrender** or collapse of the Self. In his study "La fatigue d'être soi: Dépression et société", the French sociologist Alain Ehrenberg has argued that the "disciplinary model of behavioural management, in which social classes and sexes were assigned their roles with authority and rules, has been given up in favour of norms that require each person to show initiative: the obligation to become oneself. The result of this new norm is not only that the entire responsibility of our lives is placed upon us, it is also a duty we owe to the collective."¹⁰ Drawing on his earlier work on the spreading of the ideal of competition from commerce and sports to questions of personal identity and self-realization, Ehrenberg presents the near epidemic spread of clinical depression as the "inversion of this constellation". Fatigue, numbness and the inability to act are said to be a "disease of responsibility", arising from the confrontation of infinite possibilities with uncontrollable trajectories. In its quest to become itself, the Self is purely and simply exhausted.

10 Alain Ehrenberg, *Das erschöpfte Selbst: Depression und Gesellschaft in der Gegenwart* (2004), p. 4

Yet another response involves re-casting the narrative of the self in the language of the therapeutic, with which biographical ruptures, perceived failures and insufficiencies can be presented as time-lagged results of traumatic experiences in earlier stages of life. It would be wrong to regard this response merely as an evasive strategy, with which the individual seeks to offload the double burden of coherence and actualization onto some distant instance of suffering. The **therapeutic Self** is a phenomenon of mass culture, ever-present in talk-shows, movies, literature, woman's magazines, and autobiographies of celebrities. Avoiding the isolated numbness of the depressed Self, the therapeutic Self is exposing its suffering in the public sphere, and it is precisely the confessional character of the introspection that holds out two attractive promises for the individual. The first promise relates to the transformation of suffering into an - almost indispensable - part of identity, brought about by the enormous proliferation of the therapeutic narrative in the media. The alleged long-term nature of the effects of suffering can provide the coherence so desperately lacking in the biographical narrative. Secondly, and again by virtue of being public, the therapeutic response holds out the promise of healing, of change, and of subsequent self-management, therewith opening the way for self-actualization.

However, on closer inspection, the first promise appears deeply problematic, the second outright false. Having taken on such a dominant role in identity discourses, suffering seems to have entered into the catalogue of "must-have" experiences for a fully-realized Self, placing an additional burden onto the individual. If public gullibility in the Wilkomirski-episode symbolizes the demand-side of this equation, the countless family break-ups following so-called "recovered memories of abuse" provide the supply-side. The second promise has been unmasked as a false one. As the sociologist Eva Illouz has argued, healing and subsequent self-management remain beyond reach because of the tautological nature of the therapeutic discourse: "The therapeutic narrative posits normality as the goal of the narrative of self yet, because that goal is never given a clear positive content, it in fact produces a wide variety of un-self-realized and therefore sick people."¹¹ Thus the coherence the therapeutic response may give to biographical narratives comes with a huge price-tag attached: it permanently pathologizes human lives.

But not all is gloom in the age of fragmentation and flux. The psychologist Robert Jay Lifton has drawn attention to a fifth – and far more positive – response. While he broadly agrees with the diagnosis of fragmentation, the autobiographical narratives of a great number of his interviewees have led him to the conclusion that "we are becoming fluid and many-sided. Without quite realizing it, we have been evolving a sense of self appropriate to the restlessness and flux of our time. This mode of being differs radically from that of the past, and enables us to engage in continuous exploration and personal experiment." Though this **"Protean Self"** – named after the Greek sea god of many forms – may still search for coherence, authenticity and meaning, it has a capacity for "responsive shapeshifting", "lubricated" by self-mockery, irony and humour. The successful performance of this "balancing act" is itself elevated to the status of an enduring character trait: Resilience is what is needed to navigate a fragmented world.¹²

11 Eva Illouz' comment during her presentation at the Einstein Forum Conference Victims and Losers, June 2006.

See also Gerd B. Achenbach, "Lebensform und Therapie" in Neue Rundschau 1997, Vol 2., in which he speculates about the benefits, a different concept of health as a „multitude of possible healths“ might provide in this context (Vielzahl möglicher Gesundheit).

For an illuminating contrast of the therapeutic self with earlier explanations of inappropriate behaviour, compare Glenn Most "Inappropriate Emotions, Then and Now", opening paper at the conference "Emotions Over Time", University of Crete, December 2005.

12 Quotes taken from Lifton, Protean Self, pp. 1-94

The term “responsive shape-shifting” may be taken to indicate that Lifton’s Protean Self is still essentially a defensive posture. Yet, the idea of continuous exploration and personal experiment, may also warrant a more radical reaction; one that fully embraces the freedom thus created. Dismissing all previous responses as pitiful lament of cultural pessimists, this theatrical response welcomes fragmentation as emancipation from the duty to be “one-and-only-one Self”. Instead of bemoaning a corrosion of character, this *theatrical Self* relishes the opportunity to playfully live in multiplicity. Having perfected the art of presentation of whatever version of whatever Self seems opportune in any given situation, the “typical” representative would be decidedly “a-typical”: In the stadium, he is the xenophobic football hooligan, but during his yoga group session he can talk at length about his two dosha types. A quixotic entertainer to friends and family, he has just been appointed treasurer at the local philatelic society for his pernicky attention to detail. To prospective employers he always seems “just the one for the job”, be the post on offer that of a corporate financial controller, used-car salesperson, or youth hostel director. His only lasting vocation, however, is called personality branding: He may seem to have a “unique selling proposition” for each occasion, yet at heart, he is convinced that “the container is more important than the content”.¹³ His containers are numerous and his working day thus endless. At home, he regularly updates his multiple accounts at mySpace, Flickr and YouTube. The little time left is spent playing several MMORPGs (Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games) at once, though his favourite obsession remains the character development of his avatar in SecondLife: “a flush of parental pride washes over me: My avatar, which so far has acted much like me ... suddenly is taking on a life of his own. Who will my alter ego turn out to be? I don't know yet.”¹⁴

13 Tayo Korede:
„Personality Branding:
Re-Inventing Yourself“,
<http://ezinearticles.com>

14 “My Virtual Life”
BusinessWeek online
cover story on the
MMORPG Second Life
with over 300.000
residents;
[www.businessweek.com
/magazine/content/06_
18/b3982001.htm](http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/06_18/b3982001.htm)

However, the theatrical response sits uncomfortably with an environment that still insists on authenticity. Constant shape-shifting may or may not be detrimental to the psyche of the individual, it is certainly unacceptable to the other, as it undermines the reliability of expectations formed. The effort to unmask the theatrical Self is perhaps most determined in the corporate recruitment process. In what is similar to an arms race, every new technique of self-presentation is being matched by techniques to reveal the core of the person. The candidate may have taken seminars on how to fool the compulsory Myers-Briggs personality test; she may have perfected her negotiation skills or neurolingual programming competence. Yet, the assessment center designer will respond in kind, using multiple role-playing scenarios and sheer attrition to neutralise all these efforts. If in doubt, recruiters are even known to cross check with mySpace. Though the virtual world seems the most unlikely of social sites for authenticity to be valued, it counts even here. The controversy surrounding *lonelygirl15* is anything but harmless; the slogan “Broadcast Yourself” was never meant as an invitation to play!¹⁵ The theatrical Self may privately escape the dilemma of fragmentation and self-realization – socially it is waiting to be shown up a fraud.

15 Compare: Frankfurter
Allgemeine Sonntags-
zeitung, 17.09.2006

Naturally, the six sketches above do not exhaust the possibilities of individual reactions to the crisis of character. Nor are these responses exclusive. They clearly co-exist within society, and more than one of them may be shown by the same individual over time. But the sketches may serve to guide the questions to be examined by the Conference:

The Future of **Character**

How do conflicting pressures of flexibility and self-actualization transform our culture and the way in which we conduct our communal life?

Is this diagnosis equally relevant in other non-western cultures?

What are the social consequences, if one of these responses comes to dominate?

How plausible are the various political and religious efforts to re-instill traditional character values?

Are there alternative sources for the basic interpersonal trust without which society may be unable to survive, let alone to thrive?

Does the process of fragmentation of the Self affect the nature of democratic politics?

Are the new possibilities for self-presentation created by virtual worlds a blessing or a curse?

How are the changing notions of character and identity reflected in literature and art?

Has character been irredeemably lost as a useful category when debating the nature of man?

If so, is this loss regrettable or welcomed?

Or could it perhaps be that the diagnosis of fragmentation, corrosion, and crisis are simply modern day expressions of an existential uncertainty of far longer lineage?

Or worse: Is all this just idle chit-chat: much ado about nothing?

The Future of **Character**

Friday, June 8, 2007

9:00

Martin Schaad
Welcome

9:30

Eva Illouz

"It's not you, it's me"
Reflections on character and "commitment phobia"

10:45

Coffee

11:15

Alain Ehrenberg

Discontent in the Civilization or New Social Cohesion?

15:00

Geert Lovink

Blogging, the Nihilist Impulse

16:15

Coffee

16:45

Dieter Thomä

Each Man is Furthest From Himself

18.00

Reception

19:00

Zygmunt Bauman

Choosing is not a Matter of Choice



EINSTEIN FORUM

Saturday, June 9, 2007

10:00

Glenn Most

The Child is Father to the Man

11:15

Coffee

11:45

Matthias Kross

Ways of Becoming Authentic
St Augustin's and St. Wittgenstein's Confessions

15:00

Wendy Doniger

The Duplicity and Multiplicity of a Single Character

16:15

Coffee

16:45

Robert Pippin

John Ford's "The Searchers" and the Mystery of "Ethan's Character"

18:00

Sudhir Kakar

Fluid identities, individual selves and other half-truths
A view from a non-Western culture

About the Speakers

Zygmunt Bauman

Emeritus Professor of Sociology, Leeds and Warsaw. Zygmunt Bauman has served as Professor of Sociology and head of department at Leeds University from 1972 until his retirement in 1990. He has held numerous visiting professorships, in Australia and elsewhere and was awarded the Amalfi European Prize in 1990 and the Adorno Prize in 1998. Widely regarded as one of the most profound and original voices in contemporary social thought, his published works include *Legislators and Interpreters* (1987), *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989), *Modernity and Ambivalence* (1991), *Work, Consumerism and the New Poor* (1998), *Globalisation: The Human Consequences* (1998), *In Search of Politics* (1999), *Liquid Modernity* (2000), *Community: Seeking Safety in an Insecure World* (2000), *Society Under Siege* (2002), *Wasted Lives: Modernity and Its Outcasts* (2003), *Liquid Love: On the Frailty of Human Bonds* (2003), *Liquid Life* (2005) and, most recently, *Liquid Fear* (2006).

Wendy Doniger

Mircea Eliade Distinguished Service Professor of the History of Religions at the University of Chicago's Divinity School. Wendy Doniger has been active in international religious studies since 1973 and much of her work is focused on translating, interpreting and comparing elements of Hinduism through modern contexts of gender, sexuality and identity. Doniger is the author, translator, and editor of almost thirty books, published in part under the name of Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, among them *Women, Androgynes, and Other Mythical Beasts* (1980), *Siva: The Erotic Ascetic* (1981), *Dreams, Illusion, and Other Realities* (1986), *The Origins of Evil in Hindu Mythology* (1988), *Splitting the Difference: Gender and Myth in Ancient Greece and India* (1999), *The Implied Spider: Politics and Theology in Myth* (1998) and *The Bedtrick: Tales of Sex and Masquerade* (2000). She has translated many Sanskrit texts including the *Rig Veda*, *Laws of Manu* and *Kamasutra*. Her latest book, *The Woman Who Pretended To Be Who She Was* (2005), is about the mythology of self-imitation in ancient India, Shakespeare, medieval Celtic, German, and French romances, and Hollywood films. Her current works in progress include a novel, *Horses for Lovers*, *Dogs for Husbands*, and *Hinduism: An Alternative History*.

Alain Ehrenberg

Professor of Sociology at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) in Paris, where he is also the Director of the Centre de Recherche Psychotropes, Santé Mentale, Société. His current research focuses on a project entitled *Cerveau, Esprit, Société. Afflictions individuelles et relations sociales à l'âge de l'autonomie généralisée*, that combines a focus on societies treatment of mental health with a critical inquiry into the current research on emotions in the sciences, humanities, and philosophy. His many published and edited works include *Le Corps militaire: Politique et pédagogie en démocratie* (1983), *Le culte de la performance* (1991), *L'individu incertain* (1995) and *La Fatigue d'être soi: dépression et société* (1998), translated into German as *Das erschöpfte Selbst* (2004).

Eva Illouz

Professor of Sociology and Anthropology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She is the author of *Consuming the Romantic Utopia: Love and the Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (2000), *The Culture of Capitalism* (2002) (in Hebrew), *Oprah Winfrey and the Glamour of Misery: An Essay on Popular Culture* (2005), as well as most recently *Cold Intimacies: Emotions in Late Capitalism* (2007). In 2004, she delivered the Adorno Lectures in Germany and was a visiting Professor at Princeton University. She is currently at work on a book *Why Love Hurts: Romantic Passion and the Experience of Modernity*.

Sudhir Kakar

Psychoanalyst and writer, Goa, India. Kakar took his Bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from Gujarat University, his Master's degree (Diplom-Kaufmann) in business economics from Mannheim and his doctorate in economics from Vienna before beginning his training in psychoanalysis at the Sigmund-Freud Institute in Frankfurt in 1971. Sudhir Kakar lectured at Harvard University, was Research Associate at Harvard Business School and Professor of Organizational Behaviour at Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad. He practices psychoanalysis in Delhi where he was also the Head of Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at Indian Institute of Technology. He held numerous visiting professorships in the US, Australia and Europe and has been a Fellow at the Institutes of Advanced Study, Princeton and Berlin. Since 1994, he is Adjunct Professor of Leadership at INSEAD in Fontainebleau, France. His many publications include *The Inner World* (1978), *Culture and Psyche* (2003) and most recently (with Katharina Kakar) *The Indians: Portrait of a People* (2007).

Matthias Kroß

Researcher at the Einstein Forum. Matthias Kroß studied history, political science and philosophy in Marburg and Berlin. In 1993, he received his doctorate at the Free University of Berlin with a dissertation on *Klarheit als Selbstzweck. Ludwig Wittgenstein über Philosophie, Religion, Ethik und Gewißheit*. He has written and (co-) edited works on hermeneutics and on the philosophy of language, such as *Mit Sprache spielen: Die Ordnungen und das Offene nach Wittgenstein* (1999), *Wittgenstein und die Metapher* (2004), *Zum Glück* (2004), and most recently *Ein Netz von Normen: Ludwig Wittgenstein und die Mathematik* (2007).

Geert Lovink

Media theorist, net critic and activist, Amsterdam. Geert Lovink studied political science on the University of Amsterdam (MA) and holds a PhD at University of Melbourne. In 2003 he was a postdoc fellow at University of Queensland in Brisbane. 2004 he was appointed research professor at the Hogeschool van Amsterdam (interactive media) and associate professor (new media) at the University of Amsterdam, now the Institute of Network Cultures. In 2005-2006 he was a fellow at the Wissenschaftskolleg in Berlin. He is an organizer of conferences, online forums, publications and projects such as community Internet providers, mailinglists and media laboratories. Over the last two decades he has lived and worked in Berlin, Budapest and throughout Central and Eastern Europe, teaching media theory and supporting independent media and new media culture. His many works include *Dark Fiber: Tracking Critical Internet Culture* (2003), and the forthcoming book *Zero Comments: Blogging and Critical Internet Culture* (2007).

Glenn W. Most

Professor of Ancient Greek at the Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa. He is also a member of the Committee on Social Thought and teaches in the Departments of Classics and of Comparative Literature at the University of Chicago. His numerous published works include *The Poetics of Murder: Detective Fiction and Literary Theory* (1983), *The Measures of Praise: Structure and function in Pindar's Second Pythian and Seventh Nemean Odes* (1985), *F.A. Wolf: Prolegomena to Homer* (coed. with A.T. Grafton and J.E.G. Zetzel 1985), *Theophrastus, Metaphysics* (1993), *Studies on the Derveni Papyrus* (1997), *Raffael, Die Schule von Athen. Über das Lesen der Bilder* (1999), *Ancient Anger: From Homer to Galen* (with Susanna Morton Braund, 2004), *Doubting Thomas* (2005), and most recently *The Genesis of Lachmann's Method* (with Sebastiano Timpanaro, 2006).

Robert Pippin

Evelyn Stefansson Nef Distinguished Service Professor in the Committee on Social Thought and Professor of Philosophy at the University of Chicago. Robert Pippin works primarily on the modern German philosophical tradition, with a concentration on Kant and Hegel. In addition he has published on issues in theories of modernity, political philosophy, theories of self-consciousness, the nature of conceptual change, and the problem of freedom. He has a number of interdisciplinary interests, especially those that involve the relation between philosophy and literature. He has published a book on Henry James and articles on Proust, modern art, and contemporary film. He is currently finishing a book on Hegel's practical philosophy, and is at work on a book about political psychology in American film. His recent publications include: *Henry James and Modern Moral Life* (2000), *Hegel on Ethics and Politics* (coed. with Otfried Höffe, 2004), *Die Verwirklichung der Freiheit* (2005), *The Persistence of Subjectivity: On the Kantian Aftermath* (2005) and *Nietzsche, moraliste français: La conception nietzschéenne d'une psychologie philosophique* (2005).

Dieter Thomä

Professor of Philosophy at the University of St.Gallen. Dieter Thomä studied philosophy and literature at the Universities of Freiburg and Berlin, attended the Henri Nannen School of Journalism in Hamburg, and received his postdoctoral qualification from Rostock University. After lecturing on philosophy in Paderborn, Rostock, Essen, Berlin, and New York, and working as Senior Scholar at the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles, he has been Professor of Philosophy at the University of St.Gallen since 2000, and Dean of the Humanities School since 2002. His publications include *Die Zeit des Selbst und die Zeit danach: Zur Kritik der Textgeschichte Martin Heideggers 1910-1976* (1990), *Eltern: Kleine Philosophie einer riskanten Lebensform* (1992), *Erzähle dich selbst: Lebensgeschichte als philosophisches Problem* (1998), *Unter Amerikanern: Eine Lebensart wird besichtigt* (2000), *Vom Glück in der Moderne* (2003) and *Totalität und Mitleid: Richard Wagner, Sergej Eisenstein und unsere ethisch-ästhetische Moderne* (2006).



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