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## *Continuity and discontinuity – a theoretical reflection*

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By Damian E M Milton (2002)

There seems to be in society, a need for unity and stability as expressed by Garfinkel in regard to individual consciousness. However, there seems to be an equal and opposite push in the other direction – towards discontinuity. There is an obvious need for both unity and discontinuity – for resolution and non-resolution in the course of human history. What is fascinating socially speaking is where these needs are expressed.

For many philosophers, objectivity is impossible, as any account has to have an ideological element from a unique individual. One cannot have a 'view from nowhere'.

Person A whose subjectivity is that of the 'outsider' cannot help but be attracted to theories and expressions of discontinuity and relativism.

Person B whose subjectivity is based on success according to set rules and upon integration into a unified structure cannot help but be attracted to theories and expressions of continuity and stability.

This argument goes beyond that of the interactionist approach of Becker who argues that those who deviate from the norm internalise the labels given to them and re-adjust personal narratives to fit. It also goes beyond the argument of the 'natural attitude' as proposed by Garfinkel as individual attitudes are not based on a universal set of competing attitudes searching for discontinuity and continuity with others through attempts at communication and non-communication. For example, slang both includes and excludes.

Due to the logic of power structures – the most powerful individuals with 'control' of social processes will usually have a vested interest in the norms of society and giving the impression of unity and common purpose. To the extent of playing to the fantasy of a knowable life – the happy ending of a typical Hollywood movie. These form the dominant forms of expression within the mainstream of society. Therefore, expressions of discontinuity are more likely found in the individual artistic expressions or from the socially marginalised or from the deliberately eccentric dynamic character. For instance: cult movie directors such as David Lynch and Peter Greenaway.

Deconstruction attempts to show the discontinuity in the unity. Ethnomethodology does the opposite. My work hopefully expresses openly attempts to do both. To resolve and dissolve, never completing either. Both unity and discontinuity are dependent upon each other as opposites. Any resolution will have a dissenter, and any dissolution will come from a personal force whose will to resolve (however impossible) will never die out. My work exposes this inherent double bind. As Derrida says:

"Deconstruction is not a memory which simply recalls what is already there. The memory work is also an unforeseeable event, an event that demands a responsibility and gestures, deeds. This act is caught, however, in a double bind: the more you remember, the more you are in danger of effacing, and vice versa. Deconstruction cannot step out of this aporia, of this double-bind, without difference." (Derrida, 1994).

Through the course of this project, one of the shocks is that the voice of the 'other' is being heard, rather than the voice of unity and harmony usually alluded to in the 'perfect norm' family narrative – papering over the cracks of the past.