

PHILOSOPHY & NATIONS

EDITED BY

AUSTIN GROSS

MATT HARE

MARIE LOUISE KROGH

essays from the
radical philosophy
archive



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VOLUME 2

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INTRODUCTION

Philosophy and nations

AUSTIN GROSS, MATT HARE &
MARIE LOUISE KROGH

Humanity, some say, has got past the stage of nationalist claims. The time has come to build larger political unions, and consequently the old-fashioned nationalists should correct their mistakes. We believe on the contrary that the mistake, heavy with consequences, would be to skip the national stage.¹

When ideas cross borders, they must lose their foreign mien and speak the language of the country in which they hope to settle, before they will be welcomed and naturalized.²

These two passages sketch something like a national imperative, in completely different contexts. For philosophy, even though ideas might cross borders, they can only do so by being naturalized. For revolution, even though the struggle for emancipation is international, all internationalism first presupposes what Frantz Fanon calls ‘national existence’.³ On the way to the ‘universally intelligible’ European philosophy that Joseph Willm aimed at back in the early nineteenth century,⁴ and on the way to internationalist struggle across more nebulously drawn boundaries between former colonial powers and the colonized, the nation implants itself, modestly, as a transition. We might be stuck in this transition.

For this second volume of essays from the archive of *Radical Philosophy*, we have selected texts that work within, or struggle against, one or several of the knots binding philosophy to the idea of the nation. However, this is not a volume concerned with philosophies *of* or *about* national identity and nationalisms, modern nation-states or ideas of cosmopolitanism as such. While

most of the pieces are written with a view to notions of nationality tied to the state-form, few offer historical or theoretical accounts of how these two were mobilized together from the late eighteenth century onwards, or of how states functioned as agents in projects of nation-building or national territorializations.⁵ Rather, it is instead a collection intended to problematize the relations between philosophy and the nation-form, their complicities (especially after German Idealism) and the possible vectors along which the two have been or could be broken apart. To centre philosophy here displaces but does not jettison the political stakes of Fanon's intervention. On the contrary, we hope to highlight similarities between the knots binding philosophy to the nation and those binding revolution to the nation. The national is a problem that reproduces itself within the remit of a global horizon, in the apparent inescapability of the nation to both the historicity of philosophy and the constitution of political bodies.

If philosophers and poets alike have conventionally been organized into national canons, this is undoubtedly related to the roles they play in national mythology. Figures like Shakespeare and Dante are represented as founders of national cultures and languages, and certain philosophers are credited as doing the same. 'Kant is the Moses of our nation', Hölderlin wrote.⁶ Given this mythology, what would be more natural, after the fall of the Third Reich – in a generalized crisis of political legitimacy, suspended between a fallen (criminal) regime and a denazification process initiated by occupying powers – than to return to Kant, as Karl Jaspers did, as the basis for a new political unity. In the first essay of this volume, Anson Rabinbach details Jaspers' intervention as a public intellectual in the post-war period in terms that, it seems, liken him to a Moses who would unite his nation. Here we approach a situation of 'Philosophy Year Zero', and we can ask if it is by chance that a philosopher should play such a role in the context of a catastrophe. Jaspers' intervention had real stakes, but its proximity to the mythological role of the philosopher as founder raises other questions. When it is forgotten

that myths of foundation are myths, they are profoundly misunderstood. It is not Plato's plan for the ideal republic that is utopian, so much as the perspective of foundation from which it is written. In the periods after wars, this utopian perspective of foundation is suddenly imposed. The powers of the day have a chance to build a new polity from scratch, employing human and social materials that have been made plastic by recent devastation. Colonial powers have often indulged in such fantasies and attempted thereby to reduce the colonized population to a blank slate. Colonization always begins, in Aimé Césaire's words, with the imperative: 'Start the forgetting machine!'⁷

Similarly, the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq was, in part, a naively utopian capitalist project, planned as the realization of neoliberal theories of the relation between the market and democracy. In this collection, this aspect is apparent in the case of the so-called 'transition to democracy' in the Eastern bloc, whose ideology required the denial of the past existence of political collectivities and the transformation of their citizens into children – see Boris Buden's 'Children of Postcommunism', below. Although the new Solons were not exactly philosophers, they enacted something like a forced realization of the utopian perspective that philosophy adopts as a methodological fiction. In Bill Schwarz's 'Actually Existing Postcolonialism', Enoch Powell explicitly appears as lost in another such Solonic reverie, in which the condition of the end of empire would not only restore the nation as 'the absolute index of what differentiated truth from falsehood',⁸ but position Powell himself as 'a lone visionary, a tribune'⁹ of an England at last returned to itself.

A second and acutely felt knot between philosophy and the nation-form is located within the historiographical problem of philosophy and of cultural formations more broadly. The narration of the history of philosophy in terms of nations and national characteristics is of a relatively recent date. It was operationalized only after eighteenth-century taxonomical projects constructed the idea of national and racial characteristics more broadly

conceived, such that differences in customs, political institutions, religious practices and cultural productions were stratified along vectors of national and racial belonging.¹⁰ The very moment such a break is admitted, the question of the unity of these different discourses under the name of philosophy is posed. It is at the juncture between national taxonomy and a unitary conception of philosophy that G.W.F. Hegel wrote that 'every individual is a *child of his time*' and that '[i]t is just as absurd to fancy that a philosophy can transcend its contemporary world as it is to fancy that an individual can overleap his own age.'¹¹ There is nothing accidental here in the metaphor of the child and its implicit reference to birth. A 'world' or an 'age' is not simply a structuring frame (like Michel Foucault's *episteme*), but a kind of spiritual or social life from which philosophy also emerges.

Hegel often refers to this underlying life as 'spiritual substance' or 'substantial spirit'.¹² When history is conceived not just as a succession of formal frames, but also as the life of a kind of spiritual substance, the concept of an 'age' is inevitably translated into more substantial concepts like community, polity or people. Accordingly, Hegel constantly wavers between various candidates for this role, as when he writes that 'the substantial spirit of a period, of a people, of an age, is one only'.¹³ But of these four – world, period, people and age – the concept of people is the only one that can function as the living and enduring substratum. For philosophers like Hegel, the particularity of a people thus comes to determine the problems that will be posed for it, which their legal, religious or philosophical revolutions will try to come to grips with. Despite the fact that, in reality, there are not things like 'peoples' that can live up to the conceptual role being placed on them, the search for a substantial bearer of history requires them. For this reason, such philosophers posit that there are groups of humans with particular characteristics, who stamp these characteristics onto their legal, religious and philosophical productions. With these suppositions, the nation becomes an ontological substratum for the historicization

of philosophy. However, it is understood very differently by different philosophers.

Before Hegel, Johann Gottfried Herder, for example, took care to emphasize that neither 'race' (a concept of whose use he has great doubts) nor 'climate' explains national unities. These are, instead, anchored in 'national *Bildung*' and in language. This does not, of course, mean that Herder's and Hegel's philosophies of history are not profoundly racialized.¹⁴ In fact, as Omedi Ochieng's article, 'The African Intellectual', emphasizes, Paulin Hountondji was forced to contend with a particularly racialized way of anchoring African philosophy in collective (or 'herd-like') 'beliefs'.¹⁵ He rejects such 'ethnophilosophy' which would not only seek to ground African philosophy in a religious and social substratum, but restrict it to this substratum. Out of the further lineages Ochieng draws, however, it is clear that the heritage of *négritude* and Bantu philosophy alike, which confirmed such a substratum in strategic and political interventions, is more of a problematic field than a settled issue.

Since the categories of difference at play in the division between nations function by comparison and counterposition, it is not surprising that one of the most explicit attempts to think the problem of mediations between national particularities in philosophy should have come from a translator. In his 1835 'Essay on the Nationality of Philosophers', with which we opened this introduction, Willm anticipated the now-common conception according to which European philosophy is essentially encapsulated in the differences or mediations between German, French and English philosophies. This conception is more stubbornly entrenched than we might like, and continues to presuppose a problematic demarcation of the essence of philosophy as first and foremost European, with all 'other' philosophy then cast as such; despite notable attempts to break out of this framework, such as that discussed by Philip Derbyshire in 'Andeanizing Philosophy'.¹⁶

What, for example, is at stake today in the persistence of syllabi organized around courses such as 'contemporary French

philosophy' or 'contemporary Italian philosophy'? What should we make of the convenience of such labels as 'French philosophy of science' or 'Italian Marxism'? The persistence of these national-historiographical gestures necessitates a confrontation with the ambiguities and political nature of such national divisions, which cannot be taken as innocent, lest philosophical work be complicit in further naturalizing the nation concept.¹⁷ One significant factor at an institutional level is that language-based departments have increasingly become the sites of material support for philosophical work on strains of philosophy – and especially approaches to their study – that fall outside of the new quasi-pluralistic scope of post-analytic philosophy in the mainstream anglophone academy. Another is the various intrications of the institutional support for philosophy with state forms, be it through university departments or the interaction between the international publication landscape and national projects of 'cultural diplomacy'.¹⁸ Yet, such partitionings of the philosophical field risk overwriting more relevant demarcations, such as those according to school, institution, tradition or other conceptual unities.

Jonathan Rée's 'English Philosophy in the Fifties' provides a fascinating example. Rée's analysis breaks ground by investigating philosophical production in relation to a 'collective institutional unconscious', aimed at showing that the seeming incapacity of the ordinary-language philosophers to provide a convincing methodological account of their purported 'revolution' in philosophy was not simply a conceptual impasse, but was rather the symptom of the fact that the 'Oxfordian conception of philosophy could not recognize itself apart from its social style'.¹⁹ It is evident that it is *Oxfordian* philosophy (of the 1950s) that is at stake in such an approach, not the nation as a whole, whatever we might take that to mean. This generation of Oxfordian philosophers took their own milieu to be metonymic for some disavowed myth of 'national philosophical characters'.²⁰ Their retroactive construction of 'British Empiricism', an unbroken tradition of 'common sense', also reinforced this metonymy, and

helped cover over the fact that their philosophical inspirations were primarily German and Austrian rather than English.²¹ Rée's piece thus undermines the terms in which his (ironical) title frames its subject matter. Nonetheless, it is clear that however much Rée's piece complicates the history of 'English philosophy', this national framework is something with which he has remained ambivalently entangled throughout his project.²² A general worry is visible here, one that attends all nation-gazing: how to *historicize* without *nationalizing*?

One pivot-point out of philosophical parochialisms of all kinds has long been found in the figure of the cosmopolitan thinker. The cosmopolitan is embodied first of all in the myths constructed around Diogenes the Cynic, who, when asked about his place of belonging, is said to have answered 'I am a citizen of the cosmos' (*cosmopolitês*). This myth is typically, both politically and philosophically, invoked as an ideal to counteract narrow horizons in general and nationalisms in particular. It is along these lines that John Sellars, in 'Stoic Cosmopolitanism', frames Gilles Deleuze's opposition between the sedentary and the nomadic as *both* a distinction between modes of philosophizing and as a way of thinking state-formation and resistance thereto. How great is the distance between a cosmopolitanism envisioned as the individual ethical mobilization of *indifference* to actually existing territorial divisions and as the actual establishment of a global social order? The dynamic by which capitalism perversely undermines and sustains nation-states in the differential between movements of finance and goods and movements of people complicates the question of the political affiliation of any transversal movement of thought that jumps directly to the cosmic. The analogy between ontological and political concerns that structures Deleuze's philosophy of cosmopolitanism is itself another form of the double question with which we began: the nation as a philosophical horizon and the nation as a political horizon.

This returns us to the quotation from Fanon with which we began. Fanon emphatically denies that a nation is constituted

culturally: by language, customs, traditions, religion or anything at all other than the combat for the liberation of the nation. A national culture is never a ground of national unity, but a product of the struggle through which a national unity emerges. This dispute, between 'a people' as constituted by a shared language and cultural or religious traditions and 'the people' as self-assertion and struggle complicates the issue of the nation, because it means that even where the nation is agreed on as the crucial unit of historical reference, the question remains open as to what the kernel and ground of a national grouping is, and above all whether this kernel is constructed as something pre- and sub-political (like race, customs or languages) or whether this kernel is something political *without remainder*.

Something like this latter suggestion is closer to what Fanon and, in this volume, Peter Hallward's Rousseau have in mind.²³ However, such an attempt to define political unity without reference to cultural givens is blindsided when cultural divisions become an obstacle. All too frequently, the schema of national identity and nationalism is the one that wins the day, not as a natural necessity, but in part because it is imposed all too easily. To situate the causes of the resurgence of contemporary nationalisms on the wrong level is to consecrate a strategic outcome as destiny. Instructive here are the difficulties of former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, as discussed by Cornelia Sorabji in her commentary, below. Over the course of its break-up, citizens of the federation realized that they were inscribed in vastly discordant teleologies and temporalities: some believing that tolerance for Islam was coming and that they were to become more part of Europe than they had been of Yugoslavia, while others imposed a future of the nationally purifying rationalization of the federation. In such a context, philosophy cannot yet claim to be done with the link between the polity and the nation, so long as its own alternatives have not yet acquired, or retained, social actuality.

One thing that makes it interesting to return to the *Radical Philosophy* archive today is that its editorial arc can partly be

sketched via its critical relationship with the strange appellation ‘continental philosophy’. This may not name any conceptual or philosophical unity worth ascribing to, but it has nevertheless designated – and perhaps still designates – a strategic position that it was necessary to adopt in the anglophone academy, and which has thereby come to refer to a real and distinct collection of traditions. An ambivalent relationship to this fact is part of *Radical Philosophy*’s consistent tendency to attach itself to the more descriptive ‘European philosophy’ when signalling allegiance to a position outside of mainstream philosophy in Britain. One of the polemical interests of *Radical Philosophy* has always lain in its counter-hegemonic efforts to provincialize the British philosophical milieu into which it intervened, and allegiances to ideas coming from Europe served as an important assistant in this endeavour. Indeed, the history of the term ‘British philosophy’ does seem to represent an exemplary case of Pascale Casanova’s theory that ‘Literatures are ... not a pure emanation of national identity; they are constituted through literary rivalries, which are always denied, and struggles, which are always international.’²⁴

An echo of this is present in attempts to rejoin philosophy with philology and a consequent focus on the phenomena of ‘linguistic difference’ or translation as a philosophical site. Nowhere is this more evident than in the perhaps surprising importance of the *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies*, which attempts to reconceive the historiography of philosophy through extended meditation on the ‘fate’ of words in their international circulation. However, as Howard Caygill points out below, it evinces an unexpected emphasis on linguistic differences *over and apart from* ‘geo-philosophy’, such that the image of philosophy as translation tends towards disjoining the circulation of languages from histories of places, institutions or, indeed, states. The object of the *Vocabulaire* is thus in a sense an ideal object, which Caygill baptizes in the symptomatic singular of ‘the European philosophical language’,²⁵ a vernacular predominantly

defined by the enunciations of a certain canon of thinkers. It is in this sense that the *Vocabulaire* has become a point of tension not only for questions of philosophical method, but also for broader concerns over the Eurocentrism of philosophy. In fact, as Lucie Mercier points out in a review of the English edition of the *Vocabulaire*, the transformation of the book's French subtitle into its English title, as *The Dictionary of the Untranslatables*, appears to be a disavowal of the explicitly European nature of the project. Despite its focus on transit and continuous variation, it ultimately remains primarily within a familiar drama of the circulation between English, French and German philosophy and the relation of each to the classical canon of Greek, Arabic, Latin. With some welcome exceptions, the dominant form of this drama is equally evident in the collection we have assembled here. Absent a convincing concept of philosophical practice outside of reflection on this repeated circulation, it can seem as if philosophy, '[i]ncapable of destroying what constitutes its own authority, ... can only reformulate the canon'.²⁶ In so far as the path of a radical philosophy does not extend beyond reflection on philosophy's 'own' history, philosophy will forever draw its authority from other authorities of a more pernicious sort.

Notes

1. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox, Grove Press, New York, 2004, p. 179, translation modified; Frantz Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre*, La Découverte, Paris, 2010, p. 234.
2. Joseph Willm, 'Essai sur la nationalité des philosophies', in F.W.J. Schelling, *Jugement de M. Schelling sur la philosophie de M. Cousin*, trans. J. Willm, Levrault, Paris, 1835, p. xii. Now largely forgotten, Willm was an important nineteenth-century Alsatian teacher, writer and translator of German philosophy into French. Many thanks to Daniel Whistler for having led our attention to this text.
3. Fanon, *Les damnés*, p. 232. For the political context to this essay, see Robert J.C. Young, 'Fanon and the Turn to Armed Struggle in Africa', *Wasafiri* 44, 2005, pp. 33–41.
4. Willm, 'Essai sur la nationalité des philosophies', p. xliii. For the broader philosophical context of Willm's essay, see Daniel Whistler, 'The Eclectic System in Cousin and Schelling', in *Kabiri: The Official Journal of the North American Schelling Society* 1, 2018, pp. 115–36; <https://journals.library.mun.ca/ojs/index.php/kabiri/article/view/1947/1518>.
5. The literature on nations, nation-states and nationalisms is too extensive for an overview here, but classic introductions can be found in Ernest Gellner's *Nations and Nationalisms* (Cornell University Press, Ithaca NY, 1983) and Eric Hobsbawm's *Nations*

- and *Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990); Partha Chatterjee's *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World* (Zed Books, London, 1986) expands the primarily European narrative by attending to the case of Indian nationalism, and Adria K. Lawrence's *Imperial Rule and the Politics of Nationalism* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2013) provides historical background to the meanings of nationalism in anti-colonial struggles against the French state. On the symbolic and representational aspects of the construction of national identity, Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (Verso, London and New York, 1991) remains the reference point, while the complementarity of nationalism and racism studied in Étienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein's *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (Verso, London and New York, 1991) has recently been situated in the contemporary landscape of European migration politics in Liz Fekete's *Europe's Fault Lines* (Verso, London and New York, 2018).
6. 'Kant ist der Moses unserer Nation', Letter of 1 January 1799 to his brother, in Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, Insel, Leipzig, 1914, p. 381; <http://archive.org/details/smtlichewerkeuo4hluoft>.
 7. 'Before the arrival of the French in their country, the Vietnamese were people of an old culture, exquisite and refined. To recall this fact upsets the digestion of the Banque d'Indochine. Start the forgetting machine!' Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (1955), trans. Joan Pinkham, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1972, p. 11.
 8. Bill Schwartz, 'Actually Existing Postcolonialism', p. 93 below.
 9. Ibid.
 10. For some other essays from *Radical Philosophy* on this topic, see Peter Osborne and Stella Sandford, eds, *Philosophies of Race and Ethnicity*, Continuum, London and New York, 2002. See also Peter K.J. Park, *Africa, Asia, and the History of Philosophy*, SUNY Press, Albany NY, 2013.
 11. G.W.F. Hegel, *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right*, Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 2008, p. 15.
 12. G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2004, pp. 14, 234; and *Introduction and Oriental Philosophy: Together with the Introductions from the Other Series of These Lectures*. Lectures on the History of Philosophy 1825/6, vol. 1, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 2009, p. 66.
 13. Hegel, *Introduction and Oriental Philosophy*, p. 66.
 14. See Robert Bernasconi, 'With What Must the Philosophy of World History Begin? On the Racial Basis of Hegel's Eurocentrism', *Nineteenth-Century Contexts: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2000, pp. 171–201.
 15. Omedi Ochieng, 'The African Intellectual', p. 302 below.
 16. See also Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, 'Cannibal Metaphysics: Amerindian Perspectivism', with an introduction by Peter Skafish, *Radical Philosophy* 182 (Nov./Dec. 2013), pp. 15–28; www.radicalphilosophyarchive.com/?s=cannibal+metaphysics.
 17. See the discussion of 'France', 'Italy' and 'Germany' in Peter Osborne and Éric Alliez, 'Introduction', in Alliez and Osborne, eds, *Spheres of Action: Art and Politics*, Tate Publishing, London, 2013.
 18. This is extensively analysed by Julianna Spahr for the analogous case of the various twentieth-century formations of 'national' literatures in Julianna Spahr, *Du Bois's Telegram: Literary Resistance and State Containment*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 2018.
 19. Jonathan Rée's essay, 'English Philosophy in the Fifties', p. 236 below.
 20. Ibid. p. 227.
 21. One important node in this history is A.J. Ayer and Raymond Winch's compilation *British Empirical Philosophers*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1952.
 22. See Jonathan Rée, *Witcraft: The Invention of Philosophy in English*, Allen Lane, London, 2019.
 23. See pp. 144–71 below.
 24. Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 2004, p. 35.
 25. Howard Caygill, 'From Abstraction to Wunsch', pp. 362–71 below.
 26. Lucie Mercier, 'Review: Barbara Cassin (ed.), *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon*' (2016); www.theoryculturesociety.org/review-barbara-cassin-ed-dictionary-of-untranslatables-a-philosophical-lexicon-by-lucie-mercier/.

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PHILOSOPHY YEAR ZERO

1 The German as pariah: Karl Jaspers and the question of German guilt

ANSON RABINBACH

A great deal has been written about Heidegger's involvement with National Socialism, and still more about his notorious silence about the crimes of the regime to which he lent his support and enthusiasm. Much has been and will continue to be said about the connections between his early philosophy and his political attitudes. But, apart from Habermas's scant references to his role after 1945, Karl Jaspers has received hardly any attention. This is especially odd, since in the 1950s Jaspers and Heidegger were the undisputed giants of postwar German existentialism, conjoined in numerous depictions linking Heideggerian *Dasein* to the irreducibility of man's existence brought into relief by the limit situation described by Jaspers' *Existenzphilosophie*. Jaspers' name was so often coupled with Heidegger's that he once considered writing a book about their differences under an epigram from Cicero's *De oratore*: 'People are always used to thinking about both of us together, and whenever people talk about us, they feel they must render judgement about us through comparisons. But how dissimilar is each from the other.'¹

Nevertheless, before 1933 such comparisons were not entirely arbitrary. In the early 1920s Heidegger and Jaspers regarded themselves as a *Kampfsgemeinschaft*, a kind of philosophical duo resolutely struggling together against the official Kantianism of the day. Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1927), like Jaspers' early work on the *Psychology of Worldviews* (1919) and his *Reason and*

Existence (1935), are – despite their disparities – explorations of how being is encompassed by what Jaspers called the ‘immanence of the world’. Only their earlier intimacy and fidelity to each other explains why Heidegger’s commitment to the Nazi revolution was experienced by Jaspers as so total a betrayal.

During the Nazi years Jaspers steadfastly chose to remain in Germany, despite his well-known antipathy to the regime and his removal from the University in 1937. For Arendt, ‘what Jaspers represented then, when he was entirely alone, was not Germany but what was left of *humanitas* in Germany. It was as if he alone in his inviolability could illustrate that space which reason creates and preserves between men.’² Unlike *Die geistige Situation der Zeit* (*The Spiritual Situation of the Age*), Jaspers’ 1931 jeremiad against the ‘despiritualization of the world’, *Die Schuldfrage* (*The Question of German Guilt*), was the first contribution to what Habermas called the postwar consensus of the Federal Republic, establishing the connection between a collective German responsibility (*Verantwortlichkeit*) and a democratic political identity.³ Jaspers later recalled that *Die Schuldfrage* was written at the moment that the crimes of National Socialist Germany were first made ‘apparent to the entire population’.⁴ But he was practically alone in publicly acknowledging that fact. Moses Moskowitz, who reported on conditions in Germany for *Commentary Magazine* in the summer of 1946, wrote that ‘To date no one (except the philosopher Jaspers) has arisen in Germany to exhort his people to repentance and expiation for the mass graves of Jews dotting half the European continent.’⁵

After the war Jaspers, who was by then in his sixties, abandoned the traditional reticence of the German academic philosopher to enter the public realm. As ‘the symbol of changed times and attitudes’, during the 1950s and 1960s he intervened forcefully in the great controversies over German rearmament and reunification. Jaspers was no longer a philosophical outsider, but had become the ‘Preceptor Germaniae’ of a new postwar Germany, the public advocate of moral reversal and a repudiation

of the 'national state thinking' that had characterized previous generations of German philosophers.⁶ In postwar Germany Heidegger's silence was a political statement; that Heidegger chose silence, while Jaspers spoke often, and to as broad a public as possible, is of enormous political significance. When Jaspers noted that in postwar Germany 'no one can in honesty withdraw from political activity and cooperation', he seemed to be speaking of Heidegger's militant silence.⁷ Moreover, his advocacy of the 'European Spirit', of the unity of Western and non-Western metaphysics, was clearly directed against Heidegger's continued insistence on the 'German' roots of his thought. In his fateful report to the Freiburg University Senate Committee in December 1945, which led to the teaching ban imposed on Heidegger in January 1946, Jaspers noted that Heidegger 'certainly did not see through the real forces and purposes of the National Socialist leader'.⁸ Their philosophical divergence was emblematic of a wider disjuncture between speech and silence in postwar German society: between the larger private world of silence and the public world of official declarations – what Ernst Nolte derisively referred to as the gap between the *pays réel* of the *Stammtisch* (pub table) and the *pays légal* of officially sanctioned ritualistic commemorations of the crimes of Nazism.⁹

Jaspers' association with the postwar revival of humanism, and the linking of political freedom and democracy with the rhetoric of 'guilt', 'atonement' and 'penalty' (reparation) in Germany, was a way of re-establishing what Jaspers called the 'unconditionality' of good and evil in politics. In contrast to Adorno's undifferentiated reading of Jaspers as the ideologue of postwar existentialist vapidness, Habermas stresses the break in Jaspers' thought, above all his insistence on a communicative concept of reason, and, more importantly, his view that only under the conditions of free communication among political equals could a new German polity be created.¹⁰

If theoretical or practical reason proved powerless to prevent politically sanctioned murder, how then, Jaspers asked, can the

nihilistic threat be removed without either opting for some illiberal *volonté général* or entirely giving up on modernity and returning to some more traditional framework, for example, that of religion? His answer was an unambiguous embrace of the values of the 'West' – that is, of Anglo-Saxon democratic liberalism. Jaspers' response thus helped produce what Habermas has called the 'basic consensus' of the Federal Republic, the implied connection between political 'responsibility' and political identity in the framework of a neo-Kantian ethics. This connection, which Habermas has called 'postconventional identity', has been – and will no doubt continue to be – called into question as Germany enters a new era of national reconstitution, of reunification. For this reason it is of interest to return to the conditions of the original formulation of this consensus – not only for the purposes of defending its original intent, but also to inquire into some of its weaknesses.

I

A cursory comparison of the text of Jaspers' *Die Schuldfrage* (*The Question of German Guilt*) published by Piper Verlag in 1979 with the first edition that appeared with Lambert Schneider Verlag in Heidelberg in 1946 reveals that a preface has been deleted in the later version. This absence is understandable, since Jaspers' opening remarks, directed at his audience in the Alten Aula of Heidelberg University, would have been superfluous twenty years ago. But the fact that they *were* necessary in 1945/46 makes us aware of the *geistige Klima* (spiritual climate) that surrounded Jaspers' words: mistrust, scepticism and the cynical attitude that after the collapse of the Nazi regime the occupation authorities were now imposing *their* ideological and political requirements on Germany. Such requirements, though they claimed to be the opposite of those commonly spoken and heard in the same room for the past twelve years, were in essence the same – a kind of spiritual diktat; this time, however, from the West. 'It is not the way of thinking, but only the direction of the aggression,

or fraudulent glorification, which has altered.' To confront this mood directly Jaspers remarked:

All thought and research are, of course, dependent on political circumstances. But the important distinction is whether thought and research are coerced by political power and employed for their own ends, or whether they are left in peace because the authorities want to preserve the freedom of research.¹¹

What primarily interests me in these and other remarks directed at the military government is the fact that Jaspers did not hide the way his own thoughts conformed to the 'political circumstances'. This, however, can be interpreted as both conformity and, to a certain extent, refusal to accommodate to circumstances. Jaspers was certainly sympathetic to the American authorities to a degree. He was present at a meeting of 'reliable' dignitaries organized by the CIC (Counter Intelligence Corps) in 1945 that included Alfred Weber, Gustav Radbruch, Regenbogen and Alexander Mitscherlich, and he had the trust of Edward Hartshorne, the man responsible for German 're-education' at the university level. However, in the complicated intrigues and conflicts between the University (and its rector, Karl Heinrich Bauer) and the CIC, Jaspers sided with Bauer in his efforts to restrict the extent of denazification at the University of Heidelberg, which was still closed.¹²

Jaspers called Germans to a new 'organization of responsibilities', one that was only possible in collaboration with the occupying powers. He rightly recognized that it was in fact a situation in which the majority of the population would not or could not accept the *distinction* between National Socialism and foreign occupation, and that his remarks were designed not only to explain the difference but to make that occupation useful: 'Then loyal integration into the wider context of the emergent world order would be a matter of conviction and real trust.'¹³ But this, I believe, only helps clarify the context of Jaspers' text. More importantly, from the standpoint of 1996, I would argue that the ways and means that Jaspers chose to argue his case are

of lasting consequence. For this reason I propose to examine his rhetorical strategy from the perspective of the controversies that have rolled over German intellectual life since the 1987 'Historians' Dispute' (we might speak of a half-decade long Normalization Dispute from Bitburg to Unification).

My intention is neither to praise nor to bury Jaspers, as was so often the case in the late 1950s and mid-1960s when he stood at the centre of controversies over rearmament, *Verjährung*, and, when he represented for many conservatives *Landesverrat* (treason), and figured at least for some on the Left, like Adorno, as the representative figure of the exculpatory 'jargon of authenticity'. Rather, I want to examine *Die Schuldfrage* from the perspective of the formation of a political and cultural narrative, a story which, at least for a specific generation of Germans, had authority, plausibility. In the very ruins of National Socialism this narrative was effective, precisely because it could rebuild the intellectual and cultural edifice that had been blown to bits by the end of the war. Thus, what interests me in this text is how it exemplifies one of the first strategies of confronting the National Socialist past. This was only possible, I should add, if its source was above all the one philosopher of repute who remained in Germany throughout the entire National Socialist era, who never collaborated with the regime, who was married to a Jewish woman, and, finally, who was identified with a 'cosmopolitan outlook'. Thus, Jaspers' *Die Schuldfrage* is the founding text of the new narrative of the 'European German', of a neutral, pacifist and, above all, ethical Germany. Yet, at the same time, what interests me is the ambiguity of this narrative, particularly as it concerns the relationship between Germans and Jews.

In this regard I would like to pose three questions. First, how did Jaspers' self-conscious choice of a highly theological language of guilt and innocence (*Schuld und Unschuld*), law and grace (*Recht und Gnade*), evasion and purification (*Ausweichen und Reinigung*), contribute to the emergence of a profoundly important idea and reality, the self-perception of Germans as

a 'pariah nation'? Second, how did the 'question of guilt' lead to the self-image and ideal of a nationless and cosmopolitan Germany as the 'Weg der Reinigung'? Third, was there, perhaps unconsciously, a transposition or 'change of place' that occurs for the first time in this text, and subsequently in popular attitudes, between Germans and Jews? To put it more simply, how did it come to be that the German people, who had been a nation-state with catastrophic consequences, could, taking the historically nationless *Volk*, the Jews, as the model of a process of self-humanization, themselves reverse the process? And, vice versa, how could the Jews, whose very humanity came from their condition of statelessness, in the wake of their own catastrophe, now deserve a state to protect them? Changing places: Germans and Jews; from nation-state to cosmopolitan citizenry; from cosmopolitan statelessness to a *Volk* with their own right to a nation-state. This theme, which is ambivalent at best, is, I believe, the unacknowledged core of the story that Jaspers proposes.

II

No single intellectual in immediately postwar Germany contributed more to the reorientation of German philosophy towards a reconceptualized Western humanism than Karl Jaspers. His change, most evident in his articles of 1945/6, and in his *Schuldfrage*, exemplifies a unique personal reckoning and transformation in the face of the catastrophe. In what was at once a moral journey and a philosophical reorientation, Jaspers attempted to break decisively with the anti-liberal, anti-political and anti-Western elements of his earlier critique of reason, deeply rooted in German idealism – especially in Jaspers' own prewar thought. Jaspers' student, the writer Dolf Sternberger, who, along with Jaspers and the literary critic Werner Krauss, founded one of the first intellectual journals in postwar Germany, *Die Wandlung*, once recalled that 'only the experience of Hitler's dictatorship made Karl Jaspers into a political philosopher.'¹⁴

Indeed, Sternberger wrote, 'a different Jaspers emerged out of the obscurity of oppression'.¹⁵ The title of Jaspers' first postwar lecture series, 'Von der geistigen Situation in Deutschland' (On the Spiritual Situation in Germany) self-consciously recalled and commented on Jaspers' 1931 *Die geistige Situation der Zeit*. Though its illiberalism and hope for a future 'respiritualization' cannot be confused with sympathy for National Socialism, *Die geistige Situation der Zeit* exemplified the melancholic pathos of anti-modernity and the nostalgia for 'substance' and 'authority' typical of the conservative revolution of the 1930s.¹⁶ It is worthwhile recalling, if only to underscore the contrast, that in that work Jaspers condemned Marxism, psychoanalysis and racial doctrine equally for 'having destructive tendencies in common'.¹⁷ In his opening remarks to the 1945/6 lectures, Jaspers emphasized his larger purpose: to provide a moral guideline for German reconstruction, an 'ethos': 'the drafting of an *ethos*, that remains for us – even if this is the ethos of a people regarded by the world as a pariah people'.¹⁸

The possibility that the Germans are or might be regarded as a 'pariah people' is perhaps the most important yet overlooked theme in Jaspers' writing during this period. An admirer of Max Weber, Jaspers derived his understanding of the concept of the pariah from Weber's own admiration for the 'tarrying endurance of the Jews'. In his *Ancient Judaism*, Weber portrayed the *ethos* of the pariah people as one of social exclusion and worldliness, combined with an inner anticipation embodied in the ecstatic visions of the Prophets. The suffering of the Jews in exile was the path to inner purity and collective redemption. Yet, as Hannah Arendt pointed out, social isolation was not without its benefits: exclusion from power was a powerful impulse to private humanity. For Jaspers, the Germans too, in an astonishing reversal, had now become a people deprived of their national existence and excluded from the community of nations because of the enormous suffering they had inflicted on others, above all the Jews. Their state destroyed, their country under foreign rule, their

leaders in flight or in custody, Germans now occupied a position not unlike the one occupied by the Jews – in an ironic twist, they had begun their own political diaspora.

Die Schuldfrage is an attempt to provide a guide to the wanderings of the German spirit in this new incarnation as a stateless spectre. But it also delivers a warning: if Germans do not complete a moral self-education, this condition might become permanent. Though its larger goal was to herald emancipation from the nation-state and the beginnings of a new world citizen, a politics ‘with a cosmopolitan intention’, it provided the Germans with a programme for citizenship in this new collective. As Arendt recognized, the new global human solidarity envisioned by Jaspers is a restatement of Kant’s ideal of ‘perpetual peace’, and a rethinking of his history from a ‘cosmopolitan standpoint’.¹⁹

If the solidarity of mankind is to be based on something more solid than the justified fear of man’s demonic capabilities, if the new universal neighborhood of all countries is to result in something more promising than a tremendous increase in mutual hatred and a somewhat universal irritability of everybody against everybody else, then a process of mutual understanding and progressing self clarification on a gigantic scale must take place.²⁰

This necessary self-clarification was both internal and external; it was predicated on a break with the major philosophical traditions in the West which conceived of thought as an isolated and solipsistic process:

Jaspers is as far as I know, the first and only philosopher who ever protested against solitude, to whom solitude appeared ‘pernicious’ and who dared to question ‘all thoughts, all experiences all contents’ under this one aspect: ‘What do they signify for communication’.²¹

For Jaspers, expression and truth were never distinct. Thinking is a practice that occurs *between* individuals; communication is not secondary to truth, not mere representation, but central. Although as a mandarin intellectual of the old school Jaspers remained somewhat sceptical of parliamentary politics, he was

also a pluralist in the sense that he believed diversity and variety across cultures to be the basis for a universal philosophy, not evidence of its impossibility. Habermas's view that modern ethics takes as its starting point the human communicative potential given in speech owes much to Jaspers' emphasis on the political significance of 'limitless communication' between, against and within traditions.

Jaspers' humanism was not predicated on the formal universalism of Kant, nor on the visible community of the nation, nor on the language of 'rights', but on the ideal of a moral existence achieved through communication with others, what he called *Existenz*. For this reason Jaspers always insisted on the public character of his utterances, and on the necessity of a public process of spiritual reconstruction. 'Everything base in public life can be corrected only in and through public life', he remarked.²² This is perhaps Jaspers' most important contribution to the intellectual reconstruction of postwar Germany: the insight that a public life is only possible in and through a constitutionally sanctioned liberal polity; that political freedom and public discussion were indispensable to producing the political 'transformation' of Germany. Political freedom, according to Jaspers, begins when the individual feels responsible for the political acts undertaken in his or her name. Though Jaspers was far less interested in the formal elements of a new parliamentary system – parties, interest groups, trade unions, and so on – he focused his attention on the moral element, what he believed was the unique element, in the German experience.

Jaspers was well aware of the obvious contradiction between the historical circumstances of Germany in 1945/46 and the message of the *Schuldfrage*: German guilt was established by outsiders, imposed by force of arms and under political dictatorship: 'We live in the situation of "*vae victis*".'²³ Yet this situation was not one of barbarism. The opening to the West, the redirection of German politics, was governed by the fact that the political identity of the Germans was prescribed and imposed from

above and outside. The victors, Jaspers added, were peoples who recognized 'human rights', indeed whose history was bound up with their very elaboration. Western values were thus imposed on Germany from outside in an authoritarian manner, but they were not discredited. A more serious inhibition to their acceptance was the condition of Germany itself. Political responsibility emerges only in authentic communication among autonomous individuals, a communication that was by Jaspers' own admission practically non-existent in the atmosphere of ruin, hunger, grief, dissolution, hypocrisy and four-power occupation that existed at that time.

Nonetheless, Jaspers still perceived a possibility for renewal in German cultural history in 1945: 'We have lost almost everything: state, economy, the secure basis of our physical existence, and even worse than that: the valid norms that bind us all together, moral dignity, the unifying self-consciousness of a people.'²⁴ This loss was accompanied by an entirely new circumstance: the disappearance of the National Socialist powers at large; the end of independent German statehood; the 'dependence of all our collective acts on the will of the occupying powers, which liberated us from the National Socialist yoke'.²⁵ But even if political initiative was limited to the narrow scope of this situation, the possibility of speech was present for the first time: 'We may now speak publicly with each other, let us now see what we have to say to each other.'²⁶ A risky enterprise, allowing Germans to speak after the collapse of the Nazi regime. No doubt Jaspers was aware of this danger when he wrote those lines in the introduction to the first volume of *Die Wandlung (The Transformation)*: 'We have changed inwardly and outwardly in twelve years. We are still in a process of further change, which cannot be foreseen.' The new journal was not conceived programmatically; it was to permit free 'meditation and discussion'. But it was also based on certain principles: on a recognition of the 'common origins of humanity' and on a rejection of the 'true evil of Nihilism', of 'contempt for humanity', and of 'heinous cynicism'.²⁷

In an autobiographical sketch written in 1957, Jaspers recalled that he was one of the few who believed that 'since 1933 it was probable, and since 1939, certain, that the events in Germany meant the end of Germany. *Finis Germaniae*.' What would such a complete breakdown of the German polity represent? As Jaspers recognized, 'so many German persons, speaking German, partakers in the events originating in the lost German state, would survive. What shall they do, what gives their existence value, do they remain Germans and in what sense do they have any task?'²⁸ These questions led Jaspers to his most important conclusions. First, Germany is no longer a political entity. Neither the German empire nor the 'Third Reich' was more than a 'short-lived political episode'. Second, the tradition of German Idealism is still a source of cultural identity: that which is still German, which 'lives in the great spiritual realm, spiritually creating and battling, need not call itself German, has neither German intentions nor German pride, but lives spiritually from things, from the ideas of worldwide communication'.²⁹ In short, the end of German political existence can now bring into existence the true German – the universal citizen.

Germans could find solace in the foundation of history (*Grund der Geschichte*) and in solidarity with that which 'human beings throughout the world experienced *in extremis*, even if these values were despised in their own Fatherland'.³⁰ But how could the twin evils of nihilism and anti-humanism be avoided; how could the *anamnestic* solidarity of Germans with the other peoples of the world be established – how could Germans cease to be citizens of a narrowly circumscribed nation-state and become world citizens?

If Jaspers might appear both excessively optimistic and naive about the potential offered by the political and moral collapse of Germany, his attitude towards the allied occupation was much more pessimistic. He considered the American occupation – which he experienced in Heidelberg – to be 'disastrous'. The blanket criterion of 'party membership' excluded all those from

political office whose competence might be useful, while the imposition of democracy from above simply substituted 'for the authority of the Germans selected by you (the American army) the authority of party hacks, party bureaucrats and their directors'. The prospect for democracy was not good. 'But not until twenty years have expired can Germany be ruled by men who are freely elected.' Jaspers did not think that the German pariah should be permitted a political life until 'the power of reasonable men – who exist in Germany, and I believe in good measure – has matured'³¹ What would that maturity entail, morally and politically? These are the questions first posed by the *Schuldfrage*.

III

Die Schuldfrage was delivered as part of a series of lectures at the University of Heidelberg during the winter semester of 1945/46.³² Its overriding theme, the renewal of a German polity through communication, is simply stated at the beginning: 'We must learn to speak with each other' (7). This process, Jaspers added, is far more than an inner-German affair. It alone could deliver 'the indispensable basis on which to speak with other peoples' (10). Before Germany could re-enter the community of nations, it had to undergo a process of political and moral self-clarification, accomplish a restoration of speech from the very ruin of language and politics. What all Germans had in common in 1945, apart from individual experiences of suffering in war and dictatorship, was only the negative experience of being 'a "vanquished nation" [*besiegten Staatsvolk*] delivered up to the mercy or mercilessness of the victor'.

Twelve years of official public propaganda created many different 'inner attitudes', but permitted no common mode of speech, no public language of communication. The possibility of bringing into public speech the private experiences of the Nazi era was made possible only by the victory of the Allies. Despite the circumstances of occupation, the 'opening of the doors of the German penitentiary' from outside made the 'German soul

dependent on this liberation'. Every German suffered losses, but no loss was as great as the loss of 'a common ethical-political foundation'. The result was profound atomization, the absence of any social solidarity, deep mistrust and suspicion between those who had supported and those who feared the regime. And yet Jaspers remained convinced 'Germany can only return to itself when we Germans find each other in communication' (14).

Throughout the text Jaspers adopts the soothing and comforting tone of a stern but sympathetic teacher: the overriding mood is pedagogical, the familiar technique of a teacher reasoning together with his or her students. Of course, there is always something slightly disingenuous about this tactic, the sole voice. But he also adopts the collective 'we', a voice which is conducive to communication. There is no finger pointing, no self-serving rhetoric:

Affect speaks against the truth of the speaker. We will not strike ourselves pathetically on the breast in order to insult others; we will not praise ourselves in self-satisfaction, which is only an effort to make others feel ill. But there should be no inhibitions created by self-protective reticence, no leniency via silence, no comfort through deception. (9)

By depriving the reader of a judging authority, Jaspers writes as part of his own audience: 'In such speech no one is the judge of the other, each is at once accused and judge' (9).

Jaspers has a clear agenda: first and foremost the separation of political responsibility from other forms of guilt. The four concepts of guilt which take up the bulk of the text are familiar. Jaspers distinguished *criminal guilt*, *political guilt*, *moral guilt* and *metaphysical guilt*. Each is weighted differently, and it is clear almost from the outset that Jaspers is far less concerned with the first than with the last three. Moreover, it is really with the third and fourth categories – moral and metaphysical guilt – that Jaspers is most seriously preoccupied. Political guilt, though it remains critical to the idea of 'responsibility', also remains elusive, and, apart from a few very indirect references, does not

distinguish the different ways that citizens might demonstrate responsibility for the acts of a criminal dictatorship.

Given the persistent controversy over the legal and moral basis of the Nuremberg trials, as well as the overwhelming inconsistency of those lesser courts which dealt with those accused of crimes during the Nazi era, Jaspers' few sentences devoted to criminal guilt, 'objectively demonstrable actions which transgressed against clearly defined laws', are barely adequate. Jaspers simply relegates this subject to the authority of the occupiers. The other sections of the text concerned with criminal guilt simply restate the classification worked out in the Statute of the International Military Court: the crime of waging aggressive war; war crimes; crimes against humanity.

Nonetheless, Jaspers argues for the legitimacy of the Nuremberg trials and against the commonplace opinion that they were a national 'embarrassment', or that any tribunal of victors against the vanquished is outside the framework of law. He rejects the *tu quoque* defence (that the victors committed the same crimes) and, most importantly, points out that the trials made manifest the most 'monstrous' consequence of the crimes committed by the Nazis. Hitler and his minions repudiated Kant's famous dictum that 'no act should be undertaken in war which makes a later reconciliation impossible', a crime which encompasses all the others and accounts for the irreparability of the German question.

Political guilt, on the other hand, refers to those whose political office implies responsibility for the acts of state taken by a particular regime. But – and this is perhaps the most important aspect of Jaspers' definition – it also includes every citizen of that state, since 'each human being is responsible, for how he is ruled' (17). Political responsibility is a direct consequence of political decisions undertaken in the name of the members of a polity whether or not they consent tacitly or explicitly: it requires 'reparations' (not yet explicitly financial), or the 'loss or limitation of political power and political rights' (21).

In contrast to political responsibility, moral guilt is borne only by individuals. Each individual is responsible for his or her own acts. The moral authority of the individual conscience supersedes all other authorities. 'Any haziness concerning this basic fact is as much a form of guilt as the false absolutizing of power as the single determining factor in events' (19). Moral deficiency is the cause of all crime: 'The perpetration of countless tiny acts of indifference, comfortable adaptation, cheap justification of injustice, indifferent promotion of injustice, participation in the public atmosphere which disseminates unclarity and as such makes evil possible', all of that constitutes moral guilt and requires both 'penance and renewal' (*Buße und Erneuerung*).

Metaphysical guilt is by far the most ambiguous and difficult to grasp of the four categories. It refers to a basic *solidarity* between human beings which makes each responsible for all the justice and injustice in the world, 'in particular for the crimes that are committed in their presence and with their knowledge. If I do nothing to hinder them, what I can do, I am guilty.' This guilt, however, is borne neither by states nor individuals, but 'by God alone'. However, recognition of this guilt requires an even greater inner transformation than does moral guilt. It requires a destruction of pride. This inner transformation 'can lead to a new beginning of active life, but only when combined with irreducible awareness of guilt which, in humility, takes its stance before God, and conceives of all acts in an atmosphere that makes arrogance impossible' (21).

Jaspers conceives of these four categories as distinct spheres of responsibility, but also as distinct spheres of action and retribution. Law might affect criminal and political guilt, but not moral or metaphysical guilt. The former are determined 'externally' by the victors (as punishment, as juridical restrictions on Nazi office-holders, as general proscription on political organization); but moral and metaphysical guilt remain outside the sphere of legal action; they are matters of individual conscience since 'no one can morally judge another' (23). Collective guilt is thus a contradiction

in terms: '*It is against all sense to make a whole people responsible for a crime*', and it '*is against all sense, morally to indict an entire people*' (24). Since only political responsibility is in any sense collective, collective guilt only has meaning as political responsibility, never as moral or criminal guilt. '*Collective guilt of a people or of a group within the people can never exist – except as political responsibility – neither as criminal, moral, nor as metaphysical guilt*' (25). This distinction is at the core of *Die Schuldfrage*.

The political implications of Jaspers' distinctions are clearly stated in a brief section entitled 'The German Questions'. If Germans are collectively responsible for the political acts of the Nazi regime, they are not criminally liable for them; nor can they be made to bear the full weight of their moral or 'metaphysical' responsibility by others. If in fact 'the Nuremberg trials removed the burden of criminal guilt from the German people, their moral and political complicity was made even more clearly evident by the fact that the regime was acting in flagrant disregard of any known moral or legal principle – including those of the defendants themselves.'³³

Jaspers is also concerned with the various plans (for example, the famous Morgenthau plan) already put forward before the war's end to 'cut up Germany', to 'restrict the possibility of reconstruction', and to 'allow it no peace in a situation between life and death' (30). Although not directly addressed, his argument also seems to speak against 'denazification' as an externally imposed moral imperative. Finally, the question of German guilt is also a political question about the future of Germany: 'It is the question whether it is politically sensible, rational, safe and just, to make an entire people into a pariah people.' Although Jaspers does not fully elaborate on this question, it is clear that his answer is that Germans are politically, morally and metaphysically responsible for the crimes of the Nazi regime, but that the absolute majority is not guilty of any criminal act, and that therefore to declare Germany a 'pariah nation', to punish its people as 'inferior, without worth, and criminal, an ejection

of humanity' is unjust and inhuman (31). This transposition is worth emphasizing. Did Jaspers believe that the Germans were being unjustly placed by the occupiers in the position of the Jews? Or did he welcome the new pariah status of the Germans as an opportunity? The first position is consistent with *Die Schuldfrage*; the second emerges more clearly in his letters.

What is clear is that for Jaspers, as for Hannah Arendt, with whom he began an intense and lifelong correspondence in 1945, human solidarity only becomes meaningful in the context of political responsibility (*Haftung*), for example, with the destruction of the nation-state. His remark, 'Now that Germany is destroyed, I feel myself for the first time uninhibited as a German', affected Arendt deeply and can be understood in this context. Regardless of any individual guilt that can be ascribed, and irrespective of moral self-scrutiny, political responsibility requires that each citizen is accountable for everything that a government or state undertakes in his name. However, under the shock of recognition that the nation-state is also capable of relieving mankind of its humanity – an annihilatory, totalitarian state deprives its citizens of solidarity – political responsibility extends beyond the borders of the nation-state. According to Arendt, this insight is Jaspers' most important contribution to the revision of Kant:

Just as according to Kant, nothing should ever happen in war which would make a future peace and reconciliation impossible, so nothing, according to the implications of Jaspers' philosophy, should happen today in politics which would be contrary to the actual existing solidarity of mankind.³⁴

Arendt, however, focused even more sharply on political responsibility: for her it was not simply moral guilt but the active engagement of citizens as moral actors that was missing in the tradition of the nation-state (and, by implication, in *Die Schuldfrage* as well).

As an attempt to formulate the principles of post-Hitler political methods which transcend the nation-state – that is, as a document of pan-Europeanism – *Die Schuldfrage* should be read in

the light of two other texts Jaspers produced in the same period: 'Vom europäischen Geist' ('On the European Spirit'), a lecture on European unity which he delivered in Geneva in September 1945, and the historical epic *Vom Wesen und Ziel der Geschichte* (*On the Essence and Goal of History*) (1949). In both of these works Jaspers developed some of the larger implications of his postwar philosophy of *Existenz*. In 1946/7 Jaspers put forward the view that 'Metaphysical ideals are not taken as straightforwardly true, but each stands for the truth of some realm of faith.' As Habermas commented, this philosophy of history brings humanity together 'coercively' in order to 'grasp its chance for a fragile solidarity'.³⁵ But, in a letter of 19 October 1946, Jaspers conceded to Arendt that this solidarity which he included in the concept of metaphysical guilt 'has nothing to do' with the kind of political solidarity – or citizenship – she envisioned. In fact, he notes,

the demand for political solidarity is only valid where the cooperation of a larger part of the population can be counted on. This was frequently there in Italy under Fascism. It is in Germany simply not present, and cannot be immediately demanded. It emerges only from the total context of living with one another.³⁶

In other words, 'solidarity' as Jaspers conceived of it was largely a metaphysical concept (before God) but not a political one, not something which could be achieved among Germans.

Germans therefore seem to be incapable of the political solidarity and active moral behaviour that would qualify them to become citizens either in Arendt's or even in Jaspers', more ecumenical, sense. They are in a state of tutelage, one which requires a moral confrontation with their own guilt, and if possible the metaphysical recognition that would allow them to surpass the narrower horizon of political and moral responsibility. But since they cannot achieve this they must remain, in some sense, a pariah people.

IV

Jaspers' central role in the intellectual development of post-1945 Germany cannot be underestimated. He embodied the casting

off of a certain type of German intellectual tradition, identified with pre-1933 German Romantic philosophy and still embodied in the stance of Heidegger – insular, anti-humanist and anti-Western. His embrace of the values of the Enlightenment – though mediated through a Protestant existentialist world-view – provided the orientation point for Germany's first major confrontation with the Nazi past. Moreover, Jaspers inaugurated the rejection of the liberal tradition of power politics closely identified with Max Weber: *Staatsraison* belonged irredeemably to the context of events that led to the German calamity. Germany could henceforth belong to the community of nations only by rejecting the tradition of the nation-state. Thus, the 'dismemberment' of Germany could not be counted among the other misfortunes suffered by Germans after the war: it might even be considered a blessing.

The break that Jaspers embodied was a major caesura in the political and intellectual constellation of the German philosophical tradition. His work was a clear repudiation of the dream of a German hegemony in central Europe, and of the 'special path' which severed German thought and politics from the traditions of the Enlightenment. Jaspers also broke decisively with the ideal of national identity as the basis for German social cohesion in the post-Hitler era. Rather, he saw the very lack of national and moral cohesion as an opportunity for reconstituting any future polity along new lines. Finally, and most importantly, he gave intellectual support to the emergence of a minimum 'national consensus' in German political life: that any future German state would become responsible for the crimes of the former, that political responsibility – whatever form that might take: reparations, trials of criminals, education – would be an integral part of postwar Germany.

Jürgen Habermas, in his role as chief protagonist of the *Historikertreit*, invoked Jaspers to re-emphasize the continuing necessity of this commitment and the need to criticize the neo-conservative attempt to destroy that long-established consensus,

to reject the reassertion of the national-state tradition, and, above all, to substitute for a new and cleansed 'national identity' – what Habermas has called the 'post-traditional' political identity of postwar Germans.³⁷

For it is only in the untroubled consciousness of a break with our disastrous traditions that the Federal Republic's unreserved openness to the political culture of the West will mean more than an opportunity that is economically attractive and inevitable in terms of power politics.³⁸

Jaspers' legacy requires that the memory of Auschwitz continue to be part of German political consciousness: 'to keep alive, without distortion, and not only in an intellectual form, the memory of the sufferings of those who were murdered by German hands'.³⁹

Habermas's explicit acknowledgement of Jaspers' significance for the moral reconstitution of postwar Germany should not, however, obscure some of the lingering weaknesses of *Die Schuldfrage*. The separation of German guilt into two spheres, moral/metaphysical and criminal/political, gave considerable support to the so-called 'silent' *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coming to terms with the past) of the immediate postwar years. It encouraged the view that politics and morality were distinct and separate spheres, and that Nazism could be regarded as an unfortunate political episode attributable to Hitler and his fanatical acolytes. The concept of metaphysical solidarity, with its manifest religiosity and pomposity, justifies some of Adorno's bitterest comments in his diatribe against the apologetic rhetoric of postwar existentialism, *The Jargon of Authenticity*. Jaspers' emphasis on absolution, authenticity and decision was in no small part responsible for much of the public language of the postwar era, which, as Adorno contemptuously remarked, 'grasped at the banal, while elevating it and enshrining it in bronze at the very heights, much in the same manner that fascism cleverly mixed the plebeian and the elite'.⁴⁰

Jaspers' strict separation of political and moral responsibility also permitted the political culture of the early Federal Republic

to substitute financial reparations and public declarations of responsibility for what might have been more effective and less ritualized attempts to reveal the truth of the Nazi past. It helped to discredit denazification, though admittedly these efforts were haphazard and poorly executed. Despite Jaspers' insistence on communication, *Die Schuldfrage* was still written in the language of German Idealism, with its oblique references and ethereal prose. Yet Jaspers' failure to name the crime against the Jews (although it is obliquely referred to), or to elaborate on the nature of National Socialism's 'singularity', did not fully discredit the exculpations that Jaspers refutes. The work's very sobriety, as Arendt recognized, was in no small part exculpation by understatement.

Even the most courageous aspects of *Die Schuldfrage* cannot be considered unproblematic. Not only did the repression of National Socialism in the 1950s have its social and psychological consequences (authoritarianism, anti-communism, *die deutsche Dumpfheit* [German stuffiness] – as the generation of '68 often called it), but the acceptance of responsibility (in Jaspers' sense) also contributed to the permanent 'oversensitivity' of many German liberals and leftists to all forms of oppression, the compulsive need to identify with 'victims', and the projection of the 'fascist imaginary' onto contemporary events. A permanent consequence of the superior 'coming to terms with the past' represented by Jaspers' *Schuldfrage* was an 'exaggerated superego', especially evident in the protagonists during the intense debate over the Gulf War in 1991. Ironically, in the aftermath of the national self-assertion of 1989/90, the Gulf War confronted Germans with a choice between peace and politics; between absolute innocence and the democratic commitment to a lesser evil. The aftershock of German guilt, especially in the peace movement, turned a legitimate anxiety of ecological disaster caused by war into the apocalyptic image of world-liquidating war: authentic sympathy for the suffering of war victims, and of the Kurds and Shi'ites persecuted by the war, turned into

moralizing self-justification. The result was not a simple pacifism but the inverted nationalism of the eternally penitential nation.

Yet, despite these more problematic aspects, *Die Schuldfrage* was an important beginning. It raised all of the issues that have subsequently been part of the West German confrontation with the past for more than four decades: abnormality versus continuity; national identity versus the burden of memory. Jaspers was the first to break decisively with the characteristic stance of pre-Nazi German philosophy, with its neo-romantic critique of Western decadence and lack of spirituality, so characteristic of both conservative and certain Marxist trends in German philosophy after 1870.

Jaspers was also the first German philosopher who remained in Germany to identify the centrality of Auschwitz for postwar German political consciousness. His contribution above all else was to insist, in Habermas's words, that

Auschwitz has become the signature of an entire epoch – and it concerns all of us. Something happened there that no one could previously have thought even possible. It touched a deep layer of solidarity among all who have a human face. Until then – in spite of the quasi-natural brutalities of world history – we had simply taken the integrity of this deep layer for granted. At that point a bond of naïveté was torn to shreds – a naïveté that as such had nourished historical continuities. Auschwitz altered the conditions for the continuation of a tissue of historical life and not only in Germany.⁴¹

Notes

1. Hans Saner, *Karl Jaspers*, Rowohlt, Hamburg, 1970, p. 147.
2. Hannah Arendt, 'Karl Jaspers: A Laudatio', in *Men in Dark Times*, Harcourt, Brace & World, New York, 1955, p. 74.
3. Jürgen Habermas, 'On the Public Use of History', in *The New Conservatism: Cultural Criticism and the Historians' Debate*, trans. and ed. Shierry Weber Nicholsen, MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 1989, p. 233.
4. Karl Jaspers, 'Nachwort 1962, Über meine "Schuldfrage"', *Die Schuldfrage*, Piper Verlag, Munich, 1965, p. 84.
5. Moses Moskowitz, 'The Germans and the Jews: Postwar Report', *Commentary* 112, 1946, p. 8; cited in Frank Stern, *Im Anfang war Auschwitz: Antisemitismus und Philosemitismus im deutschen Nachkrieg*, Bleicher Verlag, Tel Aviv, 1991, p. 11.
6. See Klaus von Beyme, 'Karl Jaspers – Vom Philosophischen Aussenseiter zum Preceptor Germaniae', in Hartmut Lehmann, ed., *The Spirit of Heidelberg 1945*, German Historical Institute, Washington DC, 1996.
7. Karl Jaspers, 'A Reply to my Critics', in Paul Arthur Schlipp, ed., *The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers*, Open Court, La Salle IL, 1981, p. 753.
8. Hugo Ott, 'Martin Heidegger und der Nationalsozialismus', in Annemarie Gethmann-Siebert und Otto Poggeler, eds, *Heidegger und die praktische Philosophie*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1988, p. 66.
9. The historian Immanuel Geiss consecrated this state of affairs as a necessary 'balancing act' between public remembrance and private forgetting: 'Even Germans cannot literally think unendingly about the "Holocaust", which they did indeed bring about. As an abstract formula for the necessary balance between remembrance and forgetting – both necessary in themselves – we might perhaps consider the distinction between public and private, collective and individual action, the former parallel to collective shame and guilt. Collectively, and in the public sphere, the memory of the Holocaust must indeed be kept alive also in Germany, in general and historical writing, in the media and in public discussion, on days of commemoration, on memorials, and in concerts. In their individual and private lives, however, those who were not part of the circle of perpetrators in the narrower sense may be allowed to forget in between times.' Translated from *Die Habermas-Kontroverse: Ein deutscher Streit*, Siedler, Bremen, 1988, p. 151.
10. See, for example, Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. Frederick Lawrence, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1987; Seyla Benhabib, 'Kritik des "postmodernen Wissens" – Eine Auseinandersetzung mit Jean-François Lyotard', in Andreas Huyssen, ed., *Postmoderne: Zeichen eines kulturellen Wandels*, Rohwolt, Hamburg, 1986.
11. Karl Jaspers, *Die Schuldfrage*, 1st edn, Verlag Lambert Schneider, Heidelberg, 1946, p. 12.
12. Renato de Rosa, ed., *Karl Jaspers Erneuerung der Universität. Rede und Schriften 1945/6*, Verlag Lambert Schneider, Heidelberg, 1986, pp. 400–422.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 374.
14. Dolf Sternberger, 'Jaspers und der Staat', in *Karl Jaspers Werk und Wirkung: Zum 80. Geburtstag Karl Jaspers*, R. Piper, Munich, 1963, p. 133.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 134.
16. See Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Kulturpessimismus vs. Fortschrittshoffnung. Eine Notwendige Abgrenzung', in Jürgen Habermas, ed., *Stichworte zur 'Geisigen Situation der Zeit'*, Volume 1: *Nation und Republik*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1979, p. 223.
17. Karl Jaspers, *Die geistige Situation der Zeit*, W. de Gruyter, Berlin, 1931, pp. 142f.
18. Sternberger, 'Jaspers und der Staat', p. 135.
19. Hannah Arendt, 'Jaspers as Citizen of the World', in Schlipp, ed., *The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers*, p. 541.
20. *Ibid.*
21. *Ibid.*, p. 543.
22. Sternberger, 'Jaspers und der Staat', p. 137.
23. See, for example, 'Die Erneuerung der Universität' (1945), in Karl Jaspers, *Hoffnung und Sorge: Schriften zum Deutschen Politik 1945–1946*, Piper Verlag, Munich, 1965, p. 31.
24. 'Geleitwort für die Zeitschrift "Die Wandlung"' (1945), in Jaspers, *Hoffnung und Sorge*, p. 27.
25. *Ibid.*

26. Ibid.
27. Ibid., p. 28.
28. Karl Jaspers, 'Philosophical Autobiography', in Schlipp, ed., *The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers*, p. 64.
29. Ibid.
30. Jaspers, 'Geleitwort', p. 29.
31. Jaspers, 'Philosophical Autobiography', pp. 68, 69.
32. Karl Jaspers, *Die Schuldfrage: Von der politischen Haftung Deutschlands*, Piper Verlag, Munich, 1987. References in parentheses in the text refer to this edition.
33. See Martin Löw-Beer, 'Verschämter oder missionarischer Völkermord? Eine Analyse des Nürnberger Prozesses', in *Babylon: Beiträge zur jüdischen Gegenwart*, vol. 1, 1986, pp. 55–69.
34. Ibid., p. 549.
35. Jürgen Habermas, *Philosophical–Political Profiles*, trans. Frederick G. Lawrence, MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 1983, p. 47.
36. Karl Jaspers to Hannah Arendt, 16 October 1946, in *Hannah Arendt/Karl Jaspers Briefwechsel 1926–1969*, ed. Lotte Köhler and Hans Saner, Piper Verlag, Munich, 1985, p. 99.
37. On the *Historikertreit*, see Anson Rabinbach, 'German Historians Debate the Nazi Past', *Dissent*, Spring 1988, pp. 192–200; Charles Maier, *The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust, and German National Identity*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 1988; Richard J. Evans, *In Hitler's Shadow: West German Historians and the Attempt to Escape from the Nazi Past*, Pantheon, New York, 1989.
38. Jürgen Habermas, 'Historical Consciousness and Post-Traditional Identity', in *The New Conservatism*, p. 251.
39. Jürgen Habermas, 'On the Public Use of History', in *The New Conservatism*, p. 233.
40. Theodor W. Adorno, *The Jargon of Authenticity*, Routledge, London, 1986, pp. 6–7 (trans. altered).
41. Habermas, 'Historical Consciousness and Post-Traditional Identity', pp. 251–2.

2 **Socialist Socrates: Ernst Bloch in the GDR**

ANNA-SABINE ERNST & GERWIN KLINGER

A philosopher is being ‘turned’

Ernst Bloch is experiencing a peculiar revival. Peculiar in the sense that, currently fashionable discourses of ‘the future’ notwithstanding, contemporary interest in his philosophy focuses not so much on his concept of concrete utopia as on reshaping the Bloch image. This is no coincidence. Ever since the German ‘turn’ (*Wende*) of 1989, German philosophy has singled out Ernst Bloch for particular consideration. Bloch was a philosopher whose writings were, among other things, consistently geared towards interventions in the concrete political issues and constellations of his time. The entire ‘German wretchedness’ of the twentieth century, including the era of Wilhelm II and World War I, the Nazi regime, World War II, and the subsequent division of Germany, are reflected in his writings. During the period of exile, Bloch was involved in battles between the different political fractions concerning issues of anti-fascism and Stalinism. Returning from exile, Bloch entered the German Democratic Republic, where he found himself straitjacketed by the dogmatic application of GDR-style Marxism–Leninism. In 1956 he finally broke with a version of socialism he recognized to be incapable of reform. Upon his crossing over into West Germany in 1961, he became a leading figure for the student movement.

All of these events, even at a cursory glance, provide sufficient reason and ample material for reviewing a portion of the contemporary history of philosophy. What is at issue here

are current attempts to re-evaluate twentieth-century German history in the light of the 1989 'turn'. These have occasioned embittered contestations of interpretation, which have come to dominate the recent reception of Ernst Bloch, resulting in a plethora of Bloch images and interventions motivated by particular slants in the politics of interpretation.

In his book *Der zerstörte Traum. Vom Ende des utopischen Zeitalters* (*The Dream Destroyed: On the End of the Age of Utopia*, 1991), Joachim Fest, veteran editor of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, attempts to make the failure of law-and-order socialism the nail in the coffin of any social-utopian notion of a just society. The principle of hope, vital motor of any social movement, is thereby eliminated in the name of the status quo. Fest sketches Bloch as an apocalyptic rider of Stalin, deriving from Marxism 'only the messianic motif', the 'Marxian prophecy'. For Fest, the figure of Bloch the prophet exemplifies the fact that a socialist utopia did not experience its violation at the hands of Stalinism, but found its actual fulfilment there. It followed the 'inevitability by which utopian ideas of world redemption make their way into totalitarianism'. Bloch

saw the Soviet Union as a precedent of Christ's ascension to power as Caesar; he celebrated Lenin as Caesar and toed the line of every twist and turn of Moscow politics – an exercise that degraded his thinking and his person. He still celebrated Stalin and sang his praises at a time when he could have known better, and, with a categorical shotgun in hand, declared the Moscow Trials to herald a better future.¹

Such are the coarse methods used to discredit Bloch; they brush over the distinctions to be drawn between political and philosophical, private and public pronouncements, as well as over the specificities of changing historical and political constellations.

Manfred Riedel's picture of Bloch, outlined in *Tradition und Utopie. Ernst Blochs Philosophie im Lichte unserer geschichtlichen Denkerfahrung* (*Tradition and Utopia: Ernst Bloch's Philosophy in the Light of Reflection on Our Historical Experience*), looks very

different. A conservative adherent of Bloch's philosophy, the author is confronted by the problem that 'Bloch's ideas have become devalued with the downfall of Marxism.'¹² Hence his intention of drawing a neat distinction between the actual consistent themes in Bloch's thinking, on the one hand, and a particular version of Marxism accompanied by a particular contemporary type of commitment to socialist principles, on the other. What Riedel sees as politically decisive is Bloch's 'dream of a "true Germany"'. With this vision, Bloch was drawn into the whirlpool of the 'civil war in Europe' and was thrown backwards and forwards between an eastward and a westward orientation. The motifs that henceforth become decisive in characterizing Bloch's stance, according to Riedel, include 'home country' (*Heimat*), 'Germany', 'European fatherland', 'democracy' and 'human rights'. These topoi seem apt to reconcile Bloch with the conservative zeitgeist. Their meaning, however, remains indeterminate. What is of interest, rather, is the precise way in which these themes feature in Bloch's writings.

The Left, likewise, has its problems in dealing with Bloch. He forms the centre of diverging lines leading to contradictory positions: to Stalin, whose trials Bloch defended, on the one hand; and to the de-Stalinization efforts of Eastern reform communism, the Western Marxism of the New Left, and the student movement, on the other hand. The extent of the narrow-mindedness evident here is shown by the journal *Utopie kreativ*. This journal, whose title ostensibly refers to what Bloch has come to stand for, makes it its task to present revealing archival documents of the SED (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands). These show SED functionaries intent on rectifying Bloch's 1956 oppositional stance in the Cultural Association for the Democratic Renewal of Germany by means of a tribunal. Exposing this plan of the SED might have been a meaningful contribution to the restoration of historical truth, especially when embarked on by a PDS-oriented journal. (Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus succeeded the East German SED

after 1989.) However, it relies on a portrait of Bloch drawn by the East German philosopher Arnold Schölzel, which distorts perspectives in a bizarre way. Schölzel shows little or no interest in the tribunal instituted against Bloch. While he contents himself with denouncing it as 'unspeakable', shunning the effort to find words to understand it, he is alerted to the 'malicious slander' that Bloch experienced in the West at the hands of the 'Raddatz of all times' after leaving the GDR.³ The East German philosopher Irrlitz, in contrast, gave a sigh of relief, as it were, at Bloch's decision. Counting Bloch among the 'intellectual fathers of the civic movement', the German 'turn', according to Irrlitz, was in part Bloch's triumph.⁴

The question as to how Bloch will find his place in history has been opened once again, this time by the German 'turn'; not least because the GDR archives have now been opened and contemporary witnesses are coming forward. A piece of contemporary history of philosophy is on view.

The homecoming of the Other Germany

When Ernst Bloch returned from exile in the USA to accept a professorship at the University of Leipzig, like Bertolt Brecht, Hans Mayer and other intellectuals, he thereby affirmed the emergence of the GDR as a new German state. To them it meant the possibility of realizing their hopes for the socialist and democratic Germany for which they had fought.⁵ The miserable end to which these hopes would come was not foreseeable in those days. But soon afterwards, the cold war was to force, by hook or by crook, any thought of a third way into the scheme of Friend or Foe. The forces of democratic socialism were destroyed in the wear and tear of continuous conflict between Party, bureaucracy and ideological orthodoxy. Whatever remained was labelled 'enemy of the state', and ground to bits in the mills of repression.

However, Bloch's 1949 appointment as successor to Gadamer in the first chair of philosophy at the University of Leipzig saw him happy and confident, undaunted by the delays resulting

from the political controversy sparked by his appointment. This was partly the doing of Werner Krauss, then Romance Studies specialist and literary historian at Leipzig University, and member of the executive committee of the SED. The conservative old guard of professors around Menzel, Baetke and Kühn feared the establishment of a Marxist outpost in the traditional territory to which they themselves laid claim. They resisted Bloch's appointment by claiming that Bloch was not an academically accredited philosopher. As absurd as this may sound, it is not entirely unfounded. At that time, Bloch's great works existed only in the form of manuscripts, waiting to appear for the first time in the GDR. The majority of old-guard professors staunchly opposed Bloch's appointment, and sought to relegate him to the chair of sociology vacated by Freyer, who was discredited for his Nazi past. At this point, the Provincial Government Ministry of Education stepped in. Bloch was appointed against the will of the faculty, to take up office on 1 June 1948. It was argued that if Nazi injustice was to be made good, a positive gesture had to be made towards the exiles. The Ministry's decision was backed politically by the Soviet Military Administration (SMAD), which had signalled an interest in Bloch at an early stage.⁶

For Bloch, who was oblivious to much of this behind-the-scenes activity, the relatively comfortable existence which the chair of philosophy promised came as a relief following long years of intellectual existence outside the institution of the university. What attracted Bloch in particular was the prospect of publishing his 'overflowing and still homeless manuscripts of the last twenty years'. Thus, he writes to Schumacher in a letter from the USA, on 16 March 1948:

Finally I am, believe it or not, Spinoza and Schopenhauer may pardon me, a civil servant, expert, a recognized professor, holder of the chair of philosophy. ... Being picked up from Hamburg by car, being assured of sufficiently spacious accommodation, extra pay for heavy duty, salary equivalent to the 1932 buying power of 15–20,000 Mark. In short, my bum in butter, as the saying goes. I am ashamed and am again longing for my dream.⁷

In contrast to Brecht, who was nauseated by the 'stinking breath of the province' soon after settling in the GDR,⁸ Bloch was positively surprised by the city of Leipzig. Two months after his return, he reported to Schumacher:

I am happy and content here. Sufficient food, due to ample rations, and due to the fact that in certain restaurants one can get virtually everything, at a cost, of course, but still, without any food stamps. ... Life: One can speak one's mind, i.e. my mind; that initially seems highly surprising; and one can do so again and again, in the sense of complete freedom. University: fully equipped; the level among academics surprisingly a lot higher than that of students. Solidarity with the cause remarkable. ... Edition of my collected works will get under way sooner or later in Berlin. For the servile Germans, the professorial title breaks the ice that I felt at ease in.⁹

It was to the special conditions obtaining in Leipzig at the time that Bloch owed his sense of well-being. For it was here that the university politics of the SED, with Werner Krauss at its helm, was concerned to counterbalance the large contingent of old-guard professors with the appointment of returning emigrants. This is how the former West German emigrants, including Budzislawski, Herzfelde, Boehnheim, Bloch and others, came to make their mark on intellectual life in Leipzig during the first years of the GDR's existence.¹⁰

Gradually university life normalized. Bloch's Philosophical Seminar became fertile intellectual ground.

On the whole, one could say, he did not have a fixed circle, neither of assistants (since these were provisional appointees), nor among newly enrolled or senior students studying philosophy as their major subject. His students and adherents came from all faculties, but especially from History, German Studies, Musicology, Theology. ... Nevertheless, the initial period was such that one could say, there's someone sitting in Ritterstrasse, on the third floor of that brick building, someone who sits up there thinking up some crazy ideas.¹¹

What to unsuspecting students initially seemed like some 'crazy ideas' soon turned out to be the most interesting philosophy on offer in the GDR. Bloch was one of the few people who could provide students with something new. Wolfgang

Harich, collaborating with Bloch on the *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, describes his impression:

You got the sense that you were coming face to face with an absolute genius, once he got going in discussions, also with his fantastic anecdotes and jokes, and so forth. He was a veritable bird of paradise in what we might want to call a rather mediocre GDR – he could make the whole thing so interesting.¹²

La cathédrale – c'est moi!

To understand the power of this fascination, one has to look at the position occupied by Bloch within philosophy in the GDR. Bloch's position was marked by tense relations to two camps. On the one hand, there was traditional bourgeois philosophy, represented by someone like Menzel. It found itself sidelined by the tertiary education reforms of the early 1950s, and was decimated by the fact that its adherents emigrated to West Germany. Menzel was left as representative of an atrophied school, with equally atrophied articulations. In addition, there was the rising star of Marxism–Leninism, solidified into state ideology. In philosophy, it featured as orthodoxy, with privileged access to dialectics, the supposed pillar of Marxism. This summed up the situation of philosophy: the exodus of the old guard of professors, on the one hand, and the dogmatic sterility of official Marxism–Leninism, on the other. The traditional bourgeois tradition had found an abrupt end, without being replaced by a new, lively culture of philosophical thought.

One can guess at the electrifying effects of Bloch's teaching, which brought these different and distinct positions into confusion. In his inaugural lecture on 'University, Marxism, Philosophy', Bloch outlined his programme. He was intent on subjecting the storehouse of ideas of traditional bourgeois philosophy to Marxist scrutiny; bourgeois philosophy was to be opened up for the possibility of serving Marxism and the GDR as the latter's inheritance. Harich sums up Bloch's achievements as follows:

The reason why I have always held Bloch in high esteem is that he managed to carry with him an enormous store of knowledge and insights in a situation of spiritual and intellectual drought. The transmission of this knowledge was something that just had to be promoted, as a matter of keeping the cultural heritage alive.¹³

This particular notion of 'heritage' soon aroused the suspicion of the orthodoxy. What challenged and daunted the Party-Marxist theorists of heresy (such as Rubert-Otto Gropp, who presided over the Department for Dialectical and Historical Materialism in Leipzig), was the fact that Bloch claimed the name of Marxist philosophy for his enterprise. For that, he attracted the interest and acclaim of students, which is more than any of the obligatory courses on the basics of official Marxism–Leninism could muster.¹⁴

'Is Bloch a Marxist or not?' This was the ideological cardinal question, which remained unspoken, and yet exercised the minds of the guardians of official Marxism–Leninism from the outset. Bloch's students settled for Bloch the Marxist.

What was expected of him was to raise the standard of philosophical discussion in this place, this much is true, but also to bring with him a detailed and in-depth knowledge of Marxist philosophy – that much, likewise, remains indisputable.¹⁵

The ordering schemes of what in the tradition of Lukács was deemed authentic classical Marxism answered the above-stated cardinal question with a resounding 'no'. Harich, reader in the publishing house Aufbau Verlag and vested by the Party with considerable power in decisions concerning publishing, is prepared to accept Bloch's ingenuity, but, being a friend of Lukács, reacts with puritanical defensiveness when it comes to Bloch's version of Marxism. He considers the line traced by Bloch in relation to Marxism too obscure; and the basic pattern too transparent, which for him amounts to 'a philosophy of sympathisers', patched together from the fashion of the day in combination with communism.

It is obvious that it is made up of two basic components. One is the pursuit of things famous and fashionable, of 'in' things, which are given a new slant. Thus: 'Heidegger has *Angst*, so I have *Hoffnung*.' The new slant which he invents for things is now supposed to appeal to the communists whose credo he politically endorses, but without entering into the barracks where they are being taught discipline. In the same way he deals with Freud's work, which is also *en vogue*. Bloch says: 'The sexual drive all well and good, I also have got one – so what. But hunger! That is the most fundamental instinct.' There he's back with the proles. Somehow the man lacks seriousness of purpose. He is forever fooling around, in what one might be tempted to call frivolous thinking. ... Bloch in actual fact was considered philosophically harmless, because nobody could understand his writings – they were esoteric; his stylistic idiosyncracies did not appeal to the masses – no reason for concern in that respect. And, most importantly, it was clear to everybody who knew anything about Marxism that he was not a Marxist.¹⁶

Bloch mockingly shrugged off such small-minded litmus tests with apparent unconcern. That he was above such petty opprobrium is demonstrated by the following telling anecdote:

Bloch claimed to be a Marxist, but privately he tended to admit: 'I am the cathedral. And in the cathedral there is an altar, one of many altars, maybe the inner shrine – that is what Marxism is, maybe even only a side chapel ... I don't know. But I would say that here in the GDR the inner shrine is in the cathedral, but then *I am the cathedral!*'¹⁷

The Bloch who could assert this was still confident in his attack and critique. He publicly denounced the schematism of a bigoted Party Marxism as 'Marxism of the narrow lane', which held an original idea to be nothing but the 'link between two quotes'.¹⁸ Bloch was no doubt a leading figure in the intellectual landscape of the GDR. He was influential and highly acclaimed, as is evident in the positions and honours bestowed upon him: editor of the *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* (1953), member of the presiding council of the Kulturbund (1954), member of the Academy of Sciences and recipient of the National Prize and of the Patriotic Order of Merit (1955).

A modus vivendi

The philosophers of Marxism–Leninism held Bloch's position to be sacrosanct. It was clear to the cultural commissars of the SED, first and foremost among them Kurt Hager, that a mind like Bloch's constituted a rarity and a difficulty.¹⁹ He was not to be butchered by the knives of dogmatism. The official Party philosophers did not exercise their discriminatory powers in demarcating Bloch's philosophy from the official one, but instead sought ways to integrate this philosophical monster into their politics of ideas. Harich provides an impression of the way in which the engineers of knowledge attempted to mobilize Bloch for what they claimed as their superstructural achievements.

For propagandistic purposes and to the outside world he could be held up as a bird of paradise, but to the inside he was the transmitter of an enormous store of cultural values. ... To understand and utilize a recalcitrant and philosophically hostile individual means, in this case, to avert the impoverishment of intellectual life as it has befallen the young generation especially. Therefore the motto is to enter into an alliance with him!²⁰

What Harich formulates in the thought style of a cultural commissar, namely an informal type of repressive tolerance, might actually have been what the Party aspired to at the time. It soon turned out, however, that any notion of an ideal balance was highly precarious. Law-and-order Marxism and the creative adaptation of traditional learning did not make for a stable, harmonious synthesis. With his subversive dialectics, Bloch played his own tune, so as to make the iron laws of official Marxism–Leninism dance.

He was known to be a fellow comrade. But now it turned out that this man, in the manner of Socrates, exerted a fascination on scores of young people. ... Probably without intending to, he taught people to rethink and think through communist dogma, the dogma of historical or dialectical materialism. The end result, as can be shown in a number of cases, was that party functionaries became incapable of fulfilling their official duties. Under Bloch's supervision, they had

worked their way through this dogma. And this, of course, made him highly dangerous.²¹

However, both sides managed to retain the balance of some *modus vivendi* for another few years. This was facilitated partly through the repressive tolerance of the Party, which kept its law-enforcing watchdogs on a short leash; and partly through Bloch's not involuntarily rendered loyalty to state and Party. Occasionally Bloch's loyalty was reduced to lip service. On the occasion of Stalin's death, the *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* (February 1953) published a memorial speech composed by the Secretariat for Tertiary Education, in which Stalin is praised as the 'greatest scientist of our epoch'. Bloch tunes into this song of praise. In his essay on the *Theses on Feuerbach* in the same edition, he inserts the well-known icon of Stalin into the series of portraits of the forefathers: 'There are, indeed, philosophers who have since changed the world: Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin.'

17 June 1953

It was the momentous events of 17 June 1953 that shook the compromise. Bloch intervened by calling for the democratization of the socialist state. The critical remarks, ventured by Bloch after the tanks of the Red Army had subdued the protesting workers, were actually aimed at political conditions in the GDR as a whole, even though he presented the bitter truths on a silver platter of loyalty. In his letter, he writes:

We have to pay much closer attention, with much greater commitment, to the grievances of our people. In searching for the causes, it would be equally important not to rest content once the Western agents have been identified. They carry the full share of the blame and will have to be dealt with accordingly, so as to set an example; but they should not be used as an alibi for different, deeper causes of the manifest discontent. The advances towards the building of socialism have obviously proceeded at too rapid a pace, outstripping the masses whose co-operation should be sought. The building of socialism requires sacrifices, but those of whom it asks them have not in every case been sufficiently conscientized in

the socialist spirit. Added to this were the unnecessary sacrifices that were brought about not by the building of socialism, but by inefficiency, bureaucracy, and rigid schematism. In fact, it was a complacent, cowardly schematism which has hampered socialist conscientization where it should have been promoted. Far too often does it exhaust itself in always presenting the self-same store of quotes; it remains trapped in formalistic politics of delayed reaction, shunning any notion of individual responsibility, while being quite happy to preach lessons from above.²²

These were candid words, for which anyone lesser than Bloch would have probably been persecuted. However, Bloch's address met a fate similar to that of Brecht, which reached the public only in a truncated version: it was filed in the archives and remained without consequence. The Ulbricht regime, whose replacement would have even pleased Moscow, was trembling in its boots. It learnt its own bitter lesson, realizing that it had been kept in power only by the tanks of the Red Army. This realization, brought home to the regime through the events of 17 June, marked the birth of the Stasi-state (*Staatssicherheit* – literally, State Security): the latter tightened its ideological controls. At the University of Leipzig, a witch-hunt got underway to sniff out 'elements hostile to the Party' and '*provocateurs* and counter-revolutionaries'. With the allegation that a 'forum hostile to the Party' had been formed around the person of Teller, a student of Bloch, individual members of the Institute of Philosophy were expelled from the Party. It became clear that the forces of the 'other' Germany – that is, of a democratic-socialist Germany – no longer had any influence on the Party line, not even as a subset of checks and balances. Any attempts at democratizing the Party and society as a whole became subject to persecution, being labelled 'counter-revolutionary fraction formation', 'social democratism' or 'restoration of capitalism'. The Party got rid of the intellectual vanguard by means of a golden handshake. Brecht received his own theatre, in order to silence him. The honours bestowed on Bloch on the occasion of his seventieth birthday in 1955 were designed to elevate him into an ivory tower

far away from active politics; the Academy of Sciences received him into its ranks.

The peaceful dusk that was to envelop the democratic line of socialism did not settle in, though. In the face of a growing silence, Bloch became more vociferous. He went on a veritable campaign against the bigoted rigidity of 'Marxism of the narrow lane' which he found prevalent in the universities and which was keeping the lid on intellectual life. In lectures and university committees he mocked the lecturers of Marxism-Leninism in terms of the 'pairing of non-scientificity and mediocrity' that characterized their teaching. He vehemently defended the intellectual spaces of science and Marxism. The requirement of 'ideological clarity' served as the padlock of orthodox hermeticism. At the 4th Congress of Writers in January 1956, an anti-scholasticist Bloch gave an address adopting this motto and leading it *ad absurdum*.

Ideological clarity, ladies and gentlemen, is a serious and difficult business. You will permit me, whose subject is philosophy and whose concern is ideological clarity, to say this: What Thomas Mann says about the writer could just as well be said about the thinker: thinkers are people who take thinking a bit more seriously than other people. So that must then yield ideological clarity. ... But even to writers ... ideological instruction is not always of the kind that we need. That would be one of having one's nose rubbed in the dirt, plastering it over with schemata. Gottfried Keller, one of our great writers, once came up with the very apt picture of a dog who had his nose smeared all over with cottage cheese, and who henceforth saw the whole world as cottage cheese. There are hazy horizons, we are dealing with a partly de-natured spirit of revolution, one which has lost its alcohol content, like the pieces of music that are played in Bad Pyrmont accompanying the stroll to the fountains: eternal repetition, eternal copying, eternal harping and resting on quotes, and parthenogenesis, immaculate conception from one quote to the next. We would have achieved much more if Marxism could become indispensable, not by occupying the moral high ground, but by encouraging a scientific imagination and inventiveness which could easily ally itself with creative imagination. ... Well, all of this has to do with the fact that ideological clarity is easy in theory and difficult in practice, but nevertheless most honourable to be worked out. The

space in Marxism for this kind of clarity is wide open, provided we're talking about a clarity that is real, not strangled by schematism, not covered with the mildew of boredom.²³

Away with the pointed beard

The year 1956 saw events following upon one another at a breathtaking pace. The 20th Party Congress in Moscow (14–25 February) seemed to bring the long-awaited turn. Khrushchev's secret speech on Stalin's crimes made waves. For a brief moment, de-Stalinization and the democratic reform of socialism were on the agenda. In Poland, a reform communist by the name of Gomulka took over the reins. The slogan of a 'Polish spring in October' made the rounds. Ernst and Karola Bloch attentively registered any and every sign that could strengthen their own position. Karola Bloch sat in front of the radio, listening to the first declaration by Gomulka, translating it there and then.

For the first time, we heard a speaker giving expression to the need for a 'human socialism'. Ernst and I were taking heart, hoping that the spell was broken and that this would be followed by the form of socialism that we had dreamt about. In front of my comrades, I was singing Gomulka's praises.²⁴

Bloch, who after all had defended the Moscow trials against left-wing criticism, was shocked at the revelations of Stalin's reign of terror. For him, the 20th Party Congress was the unmistakable signal for renewal and democratization. He was hoping for the end of his own marginalization, now that even Moscow was signalling the go-ahead for reforms. But it was not to be. At the Third (SED) Party Conference in March 1956, Ulbricht made it clear that he rejected all reforms in the GDR. Bloch, who attended this conference as an observer, did not hide his disappointment over this 'One Man Show, directed by Walter Ulbricht', as he told the Scientific Council of his Institute. In overcrowded lecture halls, with students circulating their lecture notes, Bloch criticized the SED regime. As the secretary of the steering committee of the Party's university branch reported,

Bloch even demanded the resignation of Ulbricht, so as not to jeopardize German unity.²⁵

It is not entirely clear how far Bloch was prepared to go. His thinking is evident from a publication 'On the Significance of the 20th Party Congress', which was written in May 1956, but only published later.

The 20th Party Congress must ... be brought to its logical conclusions, and with its own measure *inherent in its own logic*. ... But this task is not to be delegated to a single man. ... For at the 20th Party Congress, it was brought to light for the first time, and to the outside world as well, that millions of noiselessly executed murders throughout Russia, turning ordinary people, unsuspecting communists, innocent helpless people into victims – that these were sheer bestialities, without any 'barbaric admixture of personality cult'. Admittedly, these crimes were given over to subaltern sadism only through Moscow's centrally administered showcases. ... It was the 20th Party Congress which has given Marxists an alternative yardstick, which will now have to prove its worth in its application all over the place. Its proof would lie in inner-party democracy throughout the entire socialist camp, and the re-establishment, at long last, of a theory activated in research, learning and teaching. An additional criterion would be the formation of a new popular front.²⁶

Bloch demanded that the GDR government free itself from the fixation on the Soviet model. The opportunity of a German road to socialism, opened up by the 20th Party Congress, would have to be seized. The 20th Party Congress had

opened up the possibility of fighting the notion that the Soviet Union was the *one and only model* of socialism. ... Devoutness, as in the case of the defeated, might have had a place in the initial period of touch and go, of a Soviet Sector virtually paralysed; but this is certainly not appropriate in the times of the German Democratic Republic.²⁷

These words found a resounding echo, first among students, later among the critical heads of the SED. The students adopted the polemics against the compulsory courses in Marxism–Leninism for their own cause, and fought, up to the point of lecture boycotts, for the abolition of these courses. Students of Bloch gained

popularity, were politicized and made a name for themselves as members of a 'Bloch Circle'.

There was a Bloch Circle in Leipzig, which naturally did not perceive itself as a resistance grouping by Stasi definition. It was a circle of approximately ten young people, who got together in their digs, where there was the possibility of establishing some human contact. But of course it was the actual Bloch Circle that was eyed and placed under a spotlight by those students who were regularly composing reports for the Stasi. We did not identify with anti-communism, not in the least. We wanted what in those days was called a human socialism. Neither were we in favour of free elections or for German reunification, or for contacts with other, Western philosophical institutes and schools; no, we just wanted to serve the Party, but as human socialists. We were given to the illusion that we could practise highfalutin philosophy and nevertheless remain loyal to the Party.²⁸

Students at other universities also got moving. In Jena, the Eisenberger Circle went so far as demanding free elections. When Ulbricht held a speech at the agricultural-horticultural faculty of Leipzig University, things came to a head. The agrarian policy of collectivization and of the undermining of peasant farming met with vociferous resistance. Ulbricht was made to feel the massive indignation of the students. SED District Secretary Fröhlich was alarmed. The party reports, hurriedly commissioned and collected, conveniently identified Bloch as instigator, on account of his 'political-ideological derailments'. Comrades Schleifstein and Handel were ordered to check 'the ideological situation at the Institute of Philosophy'.²⁹ The Party leadership of the University was brought into line, and the defiant Party grouping at Bloch's Institute was called to order. The first in a series of measures to restore order was the requirement of submitting fully written-up lectures of basic core courses for purposes of control.

But even within the SED, the demand for reform was articulated by members who allied themselves with the name of Bloch. These reformers, whose efforts were aimed ultimately at the 'disempowerment of the criminal Ulbricht group', Party reform

and a 'special German road to socialism', were making themselves heard in intellectual circles. The mood of reform spread to the Kulturbund, the quasi-state-sponsored organization of intellectuals in the GDR. Their most important journal, *Sonntag*, was published by Aufbau Verlag. The directors of this publishing house were Walter Janka and Wolfgang Harich, both of whom were oriented towards Bloch. Bloch was

the ideological backbone, a very important backbone without, however, belonging to this group. We were influenced by him, because he was a strong personality with international reputation; he was a great figure and defended certain positions. And since Bloch's pronouncements came in conjunction with the criticism of Stalinism and with the programmatic positions of his friend-foe Lukács, and now even with Brecht, this was irresistible. If the great Bloch says, 'Away with the pointed beard! The Party needs a new head and a new body' and 'It is unbearable to see a little sergeant-major from the province occupying the positions of Karl and Rosa' – this is enormously influential.³⁰

People grew more daring; they wanted to take action. The people in the forefront believed themselves to be on the eve of a 'red 20 July' and prepared an internal revolution. The coup was to take place at a meeting of the Central Committee. A paper entitled 'Platform for a Special German Road to Socialism' was to force Ulbricht to resign. Paul Merker, a well-respected figure, was prepared to succeed Ulbricht as Party leader, and Bloch was earmarked for the office of new state president. In preparation for this coup, contact had been established with the Western office of the SPD; contacts with the Soviet ambassador had reportedly met with a positive response.³¹

The new enemies of the state

But in Moscow the die had been cast against democratization and de-Stalinization. The Kremlin saw its control threatened by reform moves in the socialist camp. When transformation in Hungary turned into open civil war, the Red Army was called in. The literary circle around Petöfi was declared to be the centre

of a counter-revolutionary conspiracy, and its members were arrested and sentenced.

Having been dealt some severe blows, the Ulbricht regime managed to stabilize itself by conjuring up the image of the dragon of counter-revolution which had to be put down. The end of November saw the arrest of Harich, Janka, Just and Zöger. The Plattform group was presented as the Petöfi circle of the GDR, and sentenced in the course of show trials. As for Bloch, Ulbricht was keen to find out whether he was one of the rebels. On the basis of IM (unofficial collaborators') reports, the Stasi reckoned that Bloch shared their positions, but did not belong to the core group. This explains why Bloch, as one of the intellectual leading lights of the Plattform group, was not initially removed from the scene. This might well have been calculated policy. For Ulbricht could now announce with conviction that no prominent writer or thinker of the GDR had participated in the attempted coup. In the background, however, there were renewed efforts to convert Bloch to Party doctrine; these were without success. Karola Bloch, summoned to the Party for a discussion, did not budge. She protested against Harich's detention, against the accompanying lies propagated in the press, and the neglected promise of help for Lukács, who was sitting in prison in Hungary. Karola and Ernst Bloch organized a lawyer for Harich.

Hand in hand with the criminalization of the Party opposition, the universities were subjected to intervention by the Party. Teller was punitively placed in production, where he lost an arm. Zehm was imprisoned for several years in Torgau. Bloch's assistant, the Party secretary of the Institute by the name of Horn, who still allowed himself to be used as an informant against Bloch, ended up hanging himself. Others, like Zwerenz, fled to the West in time. The crushing of the circle of students around Bloch had left Bloch unscathed, but it dried up his field of activity.

The intervention of the repressive apparatuses was flanked by an ideological offensive. On 6 December Ulbricht gave the

go-ahead for massive purges with his 'Open Letter to the Student Youth'. A conference of SED delegates was set to take place at the University of Leipzig at the end of December, under the slogan 'Idealist Errors under the Token of "Anti-Dogmatism"'. As early as 19 December, Gropp could embark on a trial run of the set anti-Bloch theme in the newspaper *Neues Deutschland*. SED members of the Institute of Philosophy vowed to support Bloch, but could not withstand the pressure from above. Ulbricht took the opportunity of a public appearance in Leipzig to engage in invective against Harich and Bloch. The ensuing witch-hunt was made to seem justified. It came with the resolution that 'any effects of Harich's activities in the Philosophical Front are to be traced and liquidated'.³² Party members' slavish obedience to orders from above meant that Bloch was driven into an ambush. Even the Party leadership at the Institute of Philosophy joined in the campaign against Bloch. An open letter dated 18 January 1957 criticized Bloch's stance on Poland and Hungary, and his habit of calling the compulsory courses on official Marxism-Leninism an exercise in 'narrow-lane Marxism'. But Bloch resisted being labelled 'traitor'. He responded with a circular letter, in which he claimed ignorance of the charges against him, declaring them to be the result of misunderstandings. He purported to have welcomed the intervention of the Red Army in Hungary, and not to have known anything about Harich's plans. In the end, he offered a trade-off: his retirement and resignation from any teaching responsibilities for the right to complete his work. He tried to make this offer palatable by reminding his persecutors of the service he had done the Party while in exile: 'I have rendered loyalty to the Soviet Union as a matter of course, even throughout the period of the Moscow Trials, which I tried to outline and interpret in articles published in *Neue Weltbühne*, Prague 1937 and 1938.'³³

West German followers of Bloch were dismayed to read this letter (published in the 1983 *Bloch-Almanach*) by the figure they had come to respect as the pioneer of the 'walk tall' campaign.

To interpret the Moscow trials philosophically when it should have been a matter of openly criticizing them was considered a sacrifice of truth on the altar of the Party, as early as 1937.³⁴ By 1957, after Stalin's crimes had been exposed, this *trahison des clercs* provided all the more reason for a self-critical evaluation. But Bloch once more affirmed the clandestine Party morality, reproducing his earlier uncritical prostration to the Party. He was banking on the interests of the Party to handle things discreetly. The reference to his loyalty to the Party as a matter of exigency, the renunciation of his role as social critic, and the retreat into inner emigration – all of this was calculated to bring about a ceasefire, without having to subordinate himself to the Party in publicly denouncing his stance, and without having to break with the Party completely.

Judgement on Bloch was passed at the end of January 1957 at a conference of the Central Committee. Kurt Hager, who had counted Bloch among his associates and who had hitherto shielded him, was now prepared to sacrifice him on the altar of restoration. On 11 February, Ulbricht informed Bloch of the verdict of the Central Committee: retirement, but no prohibition on publishing. Ulbricht justified this verdict by pointing out that, 'concerning the present differences which sets us at variance, what is at issue are not your philosophical views, but your position on the politics of our workers' and peasants' state'.³⁵ At the end of August, Bloch officially retired and was deposed as director of the Institute of Philosophy. He was barred from the Institute. Karola Bloch was expelled from the Party.

The struggle against Blochism

Ulbricht's verdict fell halfway within Bloch's own suggested compromise, but it didn't remain at that. The guardians of ideological purity proceeded to stage a public sentencing, which turned inner emigration into inner banishment. In April 1957 the SED Party leadership held a so-called academic conference at the

Institute of Philosophy to denounce 'the revisionist philosophy of Ernst Bloch'. The new puppets attempted to make their careers by refuting Bloch; Bloch's former adherents were made to confess their sins. Everybody was made to renounce 'Blochism', the formula being 'Professor Bloch was not a Marxist, is not a Marxist, and did not become a Marxist during the period of his residency in the GDR since 1949'.³⁶

There seemed to have been a plan to remove Bloch from public life in the GDR after all. He lost the editorship of the *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* and his seat in the presiding council of the Kulturbund. The latter is all the more remarkable, since the Kulturbund was geared towards issues not specifically dictated by the Party, and towards pluralism. It was not an unconditional and unlimited domain of the SED. It brought together intellectuals of the most varied interests, backgrounds and opinions. Since the leadership of the Kulturbund had voiced reservations against the politics of the SED after the 20th Party Congress, the Politburo raised the 'question as to the justification of the existence of the organization'. With the prospect of the dissolution of the Kulturbund, SED members in the Kulturbund were quick to act to bring the organization into line. They brought in a regulation whereby members had to conform to the requirement of finally overcoming 'all revisionist tendencies' by publicly pledging to contribute to the 'building of socialism'.

Bloch became a prominent victim of this levelling exercise. The Presiding Council instituted inquisition-style proceedings against him on two occasions, the first one in February and the second one in December 1957.³⁷ The first time round, Bloch attempted to evade SED members handling the case: he presented the presiding members with the politely formulated concluding passage from the letter announcing his forced retirement, which he had received from Ulbricht. Bloch presented the quotes as if he were dealing with a document attesting to the most congenial agreement with the SED Party leader. The SED members in attendance promptly applauded Bloch. The next interrogation

was to end with Bloch's expulsion, or at least with the impossibility of his re-election as presiding member. That was what the cadres around Kurt Hager, Alfred Kurella and Erich Wendt had decided in a preparatory meeting. Since Bloch's expulsion had to be publicly enacted within the Council, a tribunal was staged within the Presiding Council, which was to force Bloch either to renounce his views or to face being found guilty of insufficient loyalty to the state.

However, as is evident from the minutes of the tribunal, Bloch knew how to undermine the inquisitorial logic facing him. The herald of the 'Walk Tall' campaign proved himself to be a master at defiant manoeuvring. Whenever members of the Council were intent on finding him guilty of political treason, he wheedled his way out with undaunted insistence on his defence. His defence was: 'I have never said anything; nothing can be proven or brought against me.' In his shortsightedness, he had not noticed students applauding him as an opposition figure on the occasion of his public lecture in honour of Hegel. The theme of the address had, 'of course, not contained any topical criterion'. Neither was his Institute home to any political opposition. He had simply followed his job description in lecturing on the history of philosophy. He had never demanded Ulbricht's resignation; he had welcomed the intervention of the Red Army in Hungary. He denounced Zwerenz, who had left for the West, as a 'renegade who had changed sides'.³⁸

Bloch gave the SED members sitting in judgement of him just what they wanted, namely pledges in support of socialism and of GDR politics. In the end, they could not get more out of him than an act of distancing himself from Zwerenz, which he conceded without, however, mentioning Zwerenz's name. This concession appeared in the daily newspaper *Neues Deutschland* (20 April 1958) under the headline 'I stand on the ground of the GDR'. Whenever anyone dared to question his writings, however, the limit had been transgressed, as far as Bloch was concerned. Then he would blow the cover of loyal phrases:

The question is just: What is all this for, and why is there no end to it? What do they want to achieve – to exacerbate the unrest? Or is it a matter of intimidation, and who is to be intimidated? I would only need to appear behind a lectern, and a wildfire would be ignited among students in Leipzig, Halle, Jena and Berlin. There are wars that have broken out for lesser reasons. I have not done this. I returned to this Republic, and it is my wish to find a proper place here for the fruits of my long labours. I came here on these conditions, that was what I was promised; this promise must be kept as a matter of course. I will remain here, and I am stating this simply and without pathos. But I will not allow my work to be further humiliated, shouted down, or insulted, as if there was nothing to the progressive elements which were conceded as recently as six months ago. In the West, this is called a witch-hunt. This word cannot be avoided. I am not a witch, and I do not need to be hunted down. I would like to find a place for my work, which would be no small honour to our cause and our state.³⁹

The SED did not manage to convict Bloch of ‘treason’. Nor could they expel him on grounds of being a general nuisance. There remained only one solution, namely to refrain from nominating Bloch for the Presiding Council for a second time.

Inner emigration and the long arm of the Stasi

Bloch’s expulsion from GDR cultural life had satisfied the purging urges of the Party. A few ‘relatively quiet years’ ensued.⁴⁰ Officially sentenced to silence, Bloch worked at the edition of his *Collected Works*, and got more involved in the Academy of Sciences. There he presented several ‘hard-hitting’ lectures.⁴¹ In 1960, he became chair of the Leibniz Commission. But it turned out that Ulbricht’s promise to allow Bloch to publish his work was not worth much. Klaus Gysi, the newly appointed director of Aufbau Verlag, who worked for the Stasi under the name I.M. Kurt, undermined the publication of Bloch’s work. Bloch knew how to defend himself. In 1959 he withdrew all contracts with Aufbau Verlag, and transferred them to the West German publishing house Suhrkamp. This threat had some effect. Gysi generously gave permission for the third volume of *The Principle of Hope* to be released, after having delayed it for years.

The 'quiet years' were deceptive. The Stasi had long kept Bloch under surveillance and maintained an interest in his activities. Telephone conversations were tapped, mail was opened and his house was bugged. Unofficial collaborators informed on him. On 29 November 1956, the day before Harich's arrest, a first report had been compiled *on* Bloch, from relatively thin documents on file. Not quite a month later, this was turned into a first report *against* Bloch. In May 1957 a so-called Operative Process was initiated, which was code-named OV Wildt, after Bloch's address in Wilhelm Wildt Strasse. It was not directed exclusively against Ernst Bloch, but also against Karola Bloch, against Ernst Bloch's friend Hans Mayer and his assistants Jürgen Teller and Lothar Kleine. The files were assessed by Guntolf Herzberg from the Division of Education and Research of the Gauck Commission:

What was revealed by the files, in addition, was the fact that Ernst Bloch was being interrogated along with his wife, but separately, in January 1957. The object was to try, once more, to find out by whatever means necessary what he had discussed with Harich shortly before the latter's arrest, how far he was initiated into Harich's counter-revolutionary activities, for instance into the visit of the Eastern bureau of the SPD. But both Karola and Ernst Bloch ... managed, courageously and elegantly, to evade the incriminating questions put to them.⁴²

For the Party, the case of Bloch was settled, for the time being, with his forced retirement at the end of 1957. Not so for the Ministry for Security (MfS). From 1958 the MfS files show an intensification of the campaign against Bloch. Bloch is now being accused of

views directly hostile to the Party and the State, as well as demands for the transformation of the GDR, and of the entire socialist camp. That means an adverse positioning of Bloch in the role of the accused. In that case, one only has to compile official evidence for evaluation by the courts, in order then to institute criminal proceedings against him, possibly even ending with a prison sentence. ... The circle of academics at Karl Marx University included in his alleged group of friends and intellectual associates is being widened; again and again, reference is being made to the Petöfi

Circle. Bloch is being systematically construed as the enemy. In summer 1958, two female unofficial collaborators are introduced into his household. Bloch, by himself and with his family, comes under continuous surveillance from unofficial collaborators accompanying him on his travels. In January 1959, something happens which probably no-one knew at the time, not even Bloch himself: the State Security, assisted by these unofficial collaborators, conducts a search of Bloch's home, in order to find incriminating evidence which would finally conclude this Operative Process.⁴³

The results of this search, however, seemed too meagre for the Stasi to trump up a charge. Generally speaking, the intrigues of Party and Stasi are not very easy to make sense of.

At about the same time as the Stasi was preparing the charge against Bloch, the Party was planning to use him for their own purposes. He was the only one who could counterbalance Karl Jaspers' campaign against the armament politics in East and West. The great resonance that the Suhrkamp edition of Bloch's *Principle of Hope* had created, as well as the fanfares in the West in honour of his seventy-fifth birthday (which had been ignored in the GDR) roused the fears of the Party leadership that the figure of Bloch could be elevated to a weapon in the hands of the West in the ideological fronts of the cold war. After the debacles around the publications in the West, the Central Committee's Division of Science under Kurt Hager had to admit that there was an all-round lack of clarity in matters concerning Bloch. Now, all of a sudden, 'close contact' was to be sought. Several threads running to Bloch were being spun. Klaus Gysi and the acting general secretary of the Academy, Robert Dewey, approached Bloch in their capacity as emissaries of the Party. The threads came together in the Science Division, with Dewey and Gysi being in regular contact with the Division, coordinating every move.

The conversations recorded in the files of the SED indicate a tug of war: Bloch was exploring possibilities of gaining greater elbow room; and the Party was exploring whether he could be used as an instrument of its politics. The emissary of the Party

reported to his superiors that he had gained the impression that Bloch 'wanted to overcome his condition of being insufficiently linked with the Party'.⁴⁴ In mid-September, Bloch enquired of Dewey whether there was any sign of an 'echo' from the SED Central Committee. Dewey and Gysi transmitted the message from the Party that 'there was no objection to clarifying things in public', which would best be achieved if 'Bloch himself were to appropriately outline his position on the principles of party and government politics in the sense which he himself has positively indicated to me'. But it was precisely this kind of public statement in support of Party and state that Bloch was no longer prepared to deliver. He indicated that he was prepared to prove his positive attitude 'after deliberation and agreement', and that the dispute with Jaspers was included anyway. His 'reintegration into public life', however, was to take place 'peu à peu', via the journal *Sinn und Form*, for instance.⁴⁵ But Gysi and Dewey repeatedly insisted on a public statement. It was indeed the essential condition, which Ulbricht had ordered Harich to enforce. Ulbricht's declaration reads as follows: 'It is of utmost importance to insist on a public statement by Bloch. Bloch must declare his sympathy for us and mention names.'⁴⁶ Thus the issue of a public statement in the newspaper *Neues Deutschland* became a bone of contention that prefigured a parting of the ways.

The leap into the realm of freedom and the offended alma mater

The building of the Berlin Wall ended Bloch's commitment to the GDR. News of the Wall reached Bloch and his family while on holiday in Bavaria. Heeding the wish of the Blochs' son Jan Robert, they decided not to return to the GDR. The gravity of this decision was eased by the prospect of smuggling Bloch's manuscripts out of the GDR. On 20 September, Bloch explained himself in a letter to Werner Hartke, president of the Academy of Sciences. The latter had already received several such farewell letters from members who had left for the West 'illegally'. This

time round, however, the circumstances were unusual. Bloch had also given the letter to the press, which disseminated it even before it got to Hartke. The letter read:

I returned from exile in America in May 1949, taking up an appointment to the Chair of Philosophy at the University of Leipzig. Since that time, I have lived in a state which later called itself the German Democratic Republic. During the first years of my activities at the University, I enjoyed unhindered freedom of speech, of writing, and of teaching. During the last few years, this situation changed at a rapid rate. I was driven into isolation, was not granted the possibility of teaching, contacts with students were being interrupted, my best students were being persecuted and punished, avenues of publishing were being closed off, I could not publish in any journal, and Aufbau Verlag in Berlin did not meet its contractual obligations in relation to my works. This was the making of a tendency aimed at burying me in silence. After the events of 13 August, which do not leave any hope for any living and working space for independent thinkers, I am no longer prepared to expose myself and my work to undignified conditions and to the threats which are wielded to maintain them. I therefore have to inform you, honourable President, that I can regrettably no longer be present at future meetings of the Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften, of which I am an ordinary member.⁴⁷

This statement turned into ammunition in the propaganda battles of the cold war; it was being fired by megaphone across the Wall. But Bloch surpassed this exercise in discreditation by proclaiming in a radio interview that ‘the leap across the Wall was the leap from the realm of necessity into the realm of freedom’.⁴⁸

The response to this insult was not long in coming. Soon afterwards, on 26 October, Bloch was expelled from the Academy by a resolution of the plenary. A peculiar disciplinary measure, if one considers the way in which academics usually vote on resolutions. The expulsion of a member of the Academy was an extremely grave – indeed unprecedented – move in the history of the Academy. It smelt like the deliberate creation of a precedent. Even though the Academy was being subsidized by the GDR state, this did not mean that it was the equivalent of an intellectual and educational production collective, as it became

later on. Its academics were from East and West Germany, and SED comrades were in the minority. Party structures within the Academy were weak, and at most controlled the administration and related institutes; they did not have a decisive say over the exclusively intellectual group, which constituted the highest decision-making body.

The initiative to exclude Bloch emanated from the SED. On 26 September a member of the Science Division of the Central Committee told Fred Oelßner, secretary of Bloch's philosophy class, about the intentions of the Party. Oelßner considered Bloch's expulsion a 'hard' measure. The constitution required a three-quarters majority of ordinary members in the plenary; moreover, invitations to meetings had to be issued in advance, including the agenda. Oelßner reckoned that the class taking philosophy, history, and political, legal and economic sciences, among whom there were numerous SED members, would have been capable of motivating Bloch's exclusion, given detailed preparation. But in other classes, strong resistance was to be expected, especially on the part of prominent opponents of the regime, like Frings, Mothes and Hertz. If subsequently prominent West German members were to leave the Academy, this would weigh more heavily than the case of Bloch taken by itself. Nevertheless, Oelßner was willing to 'go along in preparing and propagating Bloch's exclusion, in case this was demanded by the Party leadership'.⁴⁹

In order to mobilize veteran members of the Academy to support Bloch's exclusion, the Party cadres relied on a strategy of scandal-mongering and shock. Academy members Streisand and Dewey provided cogent 'argumentation', as arranged. The 'argumentation' was cunningly designed to re-address the reproaches raised by Bloch against the GDR regime to the Academy, thereby provoking the indignation of members of the Academy.

Bloch's contention that there is no hope of any living and working space for independent thinkers after 13 August constitutes an insult, especially to GDR scientists, the most prominent of whom

belong to the Academy. In an act of immense arrogance, Bloch dares to insinuate that members of the Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften are incapable of independent thinking.⁵⁰

The plan of scandal-mongering caught on. There was 'general indignation about Bloch's letter'.⁵¹ The philosophy class demanded Bloch's expulsion. The plenary, likewise, proceeded as anticipated by the SED. People loyal to the Party line had been mobilized; the agenda had been sent out at such short notice that the danger of West German opponents suddenly turning up was minimized. Moreover, the vote was pushed to the end of the agenda, in order to give those intent on abstaining the chance to disappear unnoticed. What provided the trigger was the fact that even conservative members of the Academy like Theodor Frings, who tried to prevent Bloch's expulsion in advance, did not take a stand in favour of Bloch, but disappeared before the resolution was put to the vote. The SED resolution was carried by the required three-quarters majority. In the Academy, up-and-coming philosophers like Manfred Buhr seized the reins. Buhr had been awarded his Ph.D. under Bloch, but he earned himself a career by refuting Bloch – he exposed the alleged immanent theology in Bloch. Buhr's verdict was generally accepted until 1989; Bloch's work found only secret admiration in the GDR.

Bloch and the German question

Bloch's departure dealt the GDR a hard blow. It meant a final parting of the ways. From this end, the question remains as to why this unorthodox and unassimilable thinker, this 'bird of paradise', could attain such eminent significance in the GDR in the first place. Or, turning the question the other way round, we could ask what kind of political line Bloch was advocating, what kind of forces were carrying him along. It is instructive to interpret the figure of Bloch from the angle of Soviet foreign policy on Germany, as Irrlitz suggests. Bloch had emigrated from the West; he is not by any means to be seen as an intellectual appendix of

the group around Ulbricht. It was all the more remarkable that his appointment was effected with the approval of the SMAD.

Soviet policy on Germany was still in flux. Before embarking on the policy of 'sovietization', Stalin wanted to keep the option of a united and neutralized, democratic-parliamentary Germany open. This was an offer held out to the West, as a way of maintaining the anti-Hitler coalition as a basis for the renewal of Stalin's foreign policy, in order to get out of the cul-de-sac of 'socialism in one country' or 'socialism in one camp'. But a 'united but neutralized Germany was a variant that was not attractive to the Western powers, confronted as they were with Eastern and Western European Communist Parties gaining in strength'.⁵²

Considered in this light, the relationship between the blocs which committed the West German state to the role of a barrier against the Eastern European People's Democracies was Stalin's defeat in victory. The Soviet option of a united and neutral Germany created its offshoots in the GDR, especially among the second-in-line SED cadres.⁵³

Until 1957, the SED represented the line of a special German road to socialism (in the end, in a weaker form, represented by the group of Schirdewan, Wollweber, Herrnsdorf ...). Among the Party functionaries of the forties, like Selbmann, Ackermann, Fechner, Leonhard, and Wandel, the beginnings of a new partnership between workers' movement and liberal bourgeoisie were more clearly visible.⁵⁴

This option was what gave SMAD cultural politics its character; initially, it was far from embarking on 'sovietization'.⁵⁵ This was the line that carried Bloch; and he, in turn, supported it. It found its final demise in 1956. It was at this point that Bloch became untenable to the GDR.

TRANSLATED BY ULRIKE KISTNER

Notes

1. Joachim Feste, *Vom Ende des utopischen Zeitalters*, Berlin, 1991, pp. 73, 60, 59, 69.
2. Manfred Riedel, *Tradition und Utopie. Ernst Blochs Philosophie im Lichte unserer geschichtlichen Denkerfahrung*, Frankfurt am Main, 1994, p. 20.
3. Arnold Schölzel, 'Ernst Bloch (1885–1977)', *Utopie kreativ* 15, 1991, pp. 55–7. Fritz Raddatz was the editor of the feuilleton of the weekly newspaper *Die Zeit*. Schölzel was part of the East Berlin philosophy scene and allowed himself to be used as an informer by the Ministry for State Security. See Guntolf Herzberg, 'Abhängigkeit und Verstrickung', in Volker Gerhardt, Henning Ottmann and Martyn P. Thompson, eds, *Politisches Jahrbuch*, Stuttgart, Weimar, 1994, pp. 160, 170.
4. Gerd Irrlitz, 'Ein Beginn vor dem Anfang. Philosophie in Ostdeutschland 1945–1950', in Walter H. Pehle and Peter Sillem, *Wissenschaft im geteilten Deutschland. Restauration oder Neubeginn nach 1945?*, Frankfurt am Main, 1992, p. 122.
5. According to Irrlitz (ibid., p. 124), Bloch did not at the time stand a chance of obtaining a chair at a West German university.
6. Ernst and Karola Bloch's departure from the United States was delayed due to passport problems. Their decision to return to Germany was influenced by their precarious financial situation, which mitigated Ernst Bloch's aversion against lecturing in the 'former land of the swastika'. Moreover, the rise of McCarthyism was not in any way encouraging, especially since Karola Bloch had at times been working for the Soviet secret service and had entered the US Communist Party under a pseudonym (see Karola Bloch, *Aus meinem Leben*, Pfullingen, 1981, pp. 110ff.). Werner Krauss entered the KPD (Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands) via his role in the anti-fascist resistance. A member of the Rote Kappelle, he had been sentenced to death and had escaped execution by a hair's breadth. On Krauss, see Gerwin Klinger, 'Werner Krauss (1900–1976) – ein Intellektuellen-Leben in deutschen Diktaturen', *Jahrbuch des Mitteldeutschen Kulturrates* 1995, 1995.
7. Ernst Bloch, *Briefe 1903–1975*, 2 vols, ed. Karola Bloch, Frankfurt am Main, 1985, pp. 593, 597, 592f.
8. Bertold Brecht, *Arbeitsjournal 1942 bis 1955*, Frankfurt am Main, 1974, diary entry 6 January 1949.
9. Bloch, *Briefe 1903–1975*, pp. 599f.
10. Exiles originally from West Germany returning to East Germany were eyed suspiciously by the Moscow clique within the SED. During the 1950s, when the SED felt it had repaid its debt by neutralizing the old guard in the universities, the returning exiles were sent into retirement so as to ensure their intellectual extinction.
11. Jürgen Teller, interview, 15 December 1993, Leipzig.
12. Wolfgang Harich, interview, 20 August 1993, Berlin.
13. Ibid.
14. Official Marxism–Leninism staked its sphere of influence with the issuing of the *Standing Orders for the Restructuring of Tertiary Education* (1951). It was imposed on students through the Social Sciences Faculty and Core Courses on the Basics of Marxism–Leninism.
15. Teller, interview.
16. Harich, interview.
17. Ibid.
18. A phrase paraded by Ulbricht. Bloch adopts and adapts it to characterize official Marxism–Leninism. Minutes of the meeting of the presiding council of the Kulturbund, 22 February 1957, Archiv des KB Akte 268. See also Anna-Sabine Ernst and Gerwin Klinger, 'Wenn es mich nicht überzeugt, kann ich keine Selbstkritik üben'. Die Verhandlungen gegen Ernst Bloch im Kulturbund der DDR', *Bloch-Almanach* 12, 1992, p. 136.
19. In the aftermath of the Formalism Debate of 1954, carried out in the *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, Rugard-Otto Gropp, director of the DHM Division and master of ideological intrigue, accused Bloch of revisionism. Bloch demanded that Gropp leave the Institute of Philosophy at Leipzig University. Hager, the SED's chief in charge of cultural affairs, intervened in a moderating function. He ordered Gropp to retreat and whipped the Party section. It is ironic that Gropp had to coordinate the *Festschrift* in honour of Bloch on the occasion of the latter's seventieth birthday one year later.
20. Harich, interview.
21. Günther Zehm, interview, 3 February 1994, Jena. Günther Zehm studied under Bloch and belonged to the

- Bloch circle. He was transferred from Leipzig to Jena in 1956. One year later he was arrested and sentenced to four years' imprisonment. He later became editor of the feuilleton of the politically conservative newspaper *Die Welt*.
22. Bloch's letter was found in the SED Party Archive in a file with explanatory notes added by intelligence agents assessing information on the events surrounding 17 June (SAPMO-ZPA IV 2/904/426, pp. 93–4). It is not entirely clear who the addressee of Bloch's letter was; most probably the letter was addressed to the University Party leadership.
 23. Ernst Bloch's address to the 4th Writers' Congress, January 1956, from an edited tape recording in the Deutsches Rundfunk Archiv (Archive of the German Broadcasting Service), Berlin.
 24. Karola Bloch, *Aus meinem Leben*.
 25. Volker Caysa, ed., '*Hoffnung kann enttäuscht werden*' – Ernst Bloch in Leipzig, Frankfurt am Main, 1992, p. 40.
 26. Ernst Bloch, 'Über die Bedeutung des XX. Parteitags', in *Bloch Ernst: Politische Messungen, Pestzeit, Vormärz*, Frankfurt am Main, 1985, pp. 359ff.
 27. *Ibid.*, p. 362.
 28. Zehm, interview.
 29. Quoted in Caysa, ed., '*Hoffnung kann enttäuscht werden*', p. 41.
 30. Harich, interview. Ulbricht had a pointed beard.
 31. Telephone communication with Harich, 7 February 1994. The title of the paper (reprinted in Wolfgang Harich, *Keine Schwierigkeiten mit der Wahrheit. Zur nationalkommunistischen Opposition 1956 in der DDR*, Berlin, 1993) provided the name for the 'Plattform Gruppe'. After his return from exile in Mexico in 1946 (where he co-founded the movement Neues Deutschland), Paul Merker was a member of the SED Party leadership. In 1950 he was expelled from the SED in connection with the 'Noel Field Affair'. He was detained in 1952. At the instigation of the Soviets, a show trial was to be staged. But since they could not extract a confession even after twenty-nine months of detention, he was sentenced to eight years' imprisonment in March 1955. In February 1956, on the eve of the 20th Party Congress, he was discharged on grounds of serious illness. He was officially acquitted in July 1956. From 1957 onwards, the publishing house Volk und Welt employed him as a reader. After the detention of Harich and Janka, Merker was 'forced by Erich Mielke to state the nature of his relation to the Party in writing' (Harich, *Keine Schwierigkeiten mit der Wahrheit*, p. 83). In the main trial against Harich, he was made state witness, together with Zöger, Just and Richard Wolf (*ibid.*, p. 88).
 32. Quoted in Caysa, ed., '*Hoffnung kann enttäuscht werden*', p. 44.
 33. Open letter from Bloch to the district leadership of the SED, 21 January 1957, quoted in Caysa, ed., '*Hoffnung kann enttäuscht werden*', p. 141.
 34. Bloch commented on the Moscow trials on two occasions, in 'Kritik einer Prozeßkritik. Hypnose, Mescalin und die Wirklichkeit', *Neue Weltbühne*, vol. 14, no. 33, 4 March 1937; and 'Bucharin's Schlußwort', *Neue Weltbühne*, vol. 18, no. 34, 5 May 1938. As Hans-Albert Walter has shown in a reconstruction of the context ('"Stalin – Richtgestalt der Liebe". Ernst Bloch und die Moskauer Prozesse', manuscript, Sendung des Hessischen Rundfunk, 17 April 1992), Bloch's interventions were aimed at taking the wind out of the sails of the criticisms directed against the Moscow trials in the liberal-left exile press. In the *Neues Tage-Buch*, Bornstein had adduced substantial evidence which led him to talk of a 'witches' trial in Moscow'. These arguments were not of interest to Bloch. He relegates the editors of the *Neues Tage-Buch* to the 'gravitational field of the Nazis', in order to separate them, as 'reactionary intruders', from the designation of 'political exile'.
 35. Ulbricht, quoted in Caysa, ed., '*Hoffnung kann enttäuscht werden*', p. 53.
 36. Quoted from a document in the files of the SED District Committee. It is dated April 1957; no further details are given. Quoted in Caysa, ed., '*Hoffnung kann enttäuscht werden*', p. 168.
 37. For a detailed outline, see Ernst and Klinger, "Wenn es mich nicht überzeugt, kann ich keine Selbstkritik üben". Excerpts of minutes were published in *Utopie kreativ* 15, 1991.
 38. Quotations from the statement of Bloch at the Conference of the Presiding Council of the Kulturbund, 13 December 1957, Kulturbund Archive, File no. 266.
 39. Statement by Ernst Bloch, presented to the Conference of the Presiding Council

- of the Kulturbund, 13 December 1957, Kulturbund Archive, File no. 320 GV.
40. Karola Bloch, *Aus meinem Leben*, p. 231.
 41. Bloch, *Briefe 1903–1975*, p. 615.
 42. Herzberg, interview, 10 January 1994, Berlin.
 43. Ibid.
 44. Abtlg. Wiss. ZK, Möhwald, Information on the conduct of Prof. Dr Bloch, 9 October 1959, SAPMO-ZPA IV 2/904/163, p. 44.
 45. Report Dewey, 26 September 1960, SAPMO-ZPA IV 2/904/163, pp. 61–4. Bloch tried to avert the impending summons to make a public statement, by suggesting that the Party would thereby harm its own image. He was said to 'consider himself a "Trojan Horse in West Germany". A public statement would prevent him from continuing to appear publicly in West Germany.' Hausmitteilung Abtlg. Wissenschaft, Hörnig to Ulbricht, 23 July 1960, SAPMO-ZPA IV 2/904/163, p. 45.
 46. Internal memo handwritten by Ulbricht, Abtlg. Wiss., Hörnig, 23 July 1960, informing him of the efforts undertaken by Gysi, SAPMO-ZPA 2/904/163, p. 45.
 47. Quoted in Peter Zudeick, *Der Hintern des Teufels. Ernst Bloch – Leben und Werk*, Moos and Baden-Baden, 1985, p. 245.
 48. This statement by Bloch, made during the course of a radio interview, is reported by both Harich (interview) and Buhr (interview, 2 November 1993, Berlin).
 49. Aktennotiz Abtlg. Wissenschaft des ZK, 27 September 1961, SAPMO-ZPA IV 2/904/163, pp. 97–8.
 50. Begründung zum Antrag auf Ausschluss von Ernst Bloch, SAPMO-ZPA, SAPMO-ZPA IV 2/904/163, pp. 99–102.
 51. Aktennotiz Abtlg. Wissenschaft, 27 September 1961, SAPMO-ZPA IV 2/904/163, pp. 97–8.
 52. Irrlitz, 'Ein Beginn vor dem Anfang', p. 118.
 53. Wolfgang Zank ('Als Stalin Demokratie befahl', *Die Zeit* 25, 16 June 1995) presented an SED document which shows Stalin impressing upon the leadership of the German Communist Party in 1945 that a policy of sovietization was not the way to avoid the division of Germany. Both tendencies were present in the SED at the time: the policy of sovietization represented by Ulbricht, on the one hand, and 'The German Road to Socialism' represented by Ackermann, on the other hand. They converged in the figure of Stalin.
 54. Irrlitz, 'Ein Beginn vor dem Anfang', p. 118.
 55. On the contrary, the SMAD tried to retain bourgeois-liberal professors like Gadamer or Litt. In Berlin, if the SMAD had had its way, Nicolai Hartmann would have been preferred to Bloch (see Irrlitz, 'Ein Beginn vor dem Anfang', p. 121).

3 Ethnic war in Bosnia?

CORNELIA SORABJI

Bosnia is fading from the news, winter has descended to sever its population from the outside world, and military intervention of any significant scale has not occurred. In Britain much of the debate over the desirability of such intervention has revolved around the idea of 'ethnic war'. Given that most wars are waged between members of different ethnic groups, it is not self-evidently clear what would constitute an 'ethnic war' or what are the implications of intervention in such a war. In his numerous television appearances Radovan Karadžić, leader of Bosnia's Serbs, has assured us that it is a conflict fuelled by mutual and age-old ethnic hatreds, and dissuaded the world from intervention. The Islamic world agrees that it is an ethnic/religious war, but sees this as the precise reason for which intervention should have occurred. Croatia agrees that an 'ethnic war' does not call for intervention, but insists that ethnicity has nothing to do with Serbian aggression, which is based on calculated economic and territorial ambitions. (On closer examination this view grows more complicated, since greed and barbarity are frequently regarded as essential aspects of Serbian ethnic identity.)

In Britain the idea of 'ethnic war' based on ancient feuds and centuries of spilled blood has had various connotations. In the earlier phases it was endowed with moral implications, suggesting that the violence was an internal matter and therefore none of our business (an analogy with the dubious idea of

wife-battering as mere 'domestic dispute' in which outsiders have no place). As public opinion moved on, and the view that all parties were guilty became less tenable, the phrase 'ethnic war' assumed a second charge. In early summer 1992 its implications became less moral than practical and could loosely be summed up thus: military intervention could not do any good because, in an ethnic war, the ethnic groups will fight on and on, incited by overwhelming hatreds, regardless of the options or consequences. A third meaning has been present all along: the idea that since ethnic identities and grudges are self-contained and self-propelling, our involvement to date has not really affected the war's internal logic and we have merely been observers and mediators.

These understandings of ethnicity are as essentialist, if not ferocious, as the nationalisms of ex-Yugoslavia. They suggest that ethnic identities are set in stone and hence immutable, whereas in fact they developed into existence and continue to develop; that they are constructed in isolation without reference to other identities, whereas in fact they are constructed in relation to other identities; and that they are necessarily more important to their bearers than any other identifications, whereas this is not invariably the case.

Far from three pristine ethnic identities meeting each other in a war, Bosnian identities have been negotiated in the course of the conflict itself, and in the build-up to it. And since war is not just a matter of arms and terrain, but also of motivations and beliefs, what are we fighting for? Who is 'us' and who is 'them'? These shifting identifications then feed back into the violence itself. Because the idea of European identity has been increasingly central to Serb, Croat and Muslim self-perceptions, and because the EC took Yugoslavia on board as a European problem, it cannot but be implicated in the construction and mutation of identities in ex-Yugoslavia. Europe is not merely an observer or mediator of self-contained ethnic identities and clashes; it is intimately involved in the ethnic dynamics of the region. This involvement is (at least)

twofold. First, by lending legitimacy to essentialist conceptions of ethnicity and to nationalist leaders, Europe has contributed to the triumph of ethnic (Muslim/Serb/Croat) categories over all other possible ways of understanding the conflict, and thus to eroding the potential for political solutions not based on ethnic principles. Second, it has played and will play a part not only in the shifting relationships *between* Bosnia's three ethnic groups, but also in the process of reconceptualization of national identity *internal* to each of them. Bosnia's Muslims are the major casualties.

Pre-war Sarajevo

The Bosnian capital – urban, multi-ethnic and proud vis-à-vis the *seljaci/peasants* – cannot be taken as representing Bosnia as a whole, and during the course of its long siege it has become one of the last bastions of multi-ethnic unity and tenacity. Nevertheless, it should not be taken as a place where understandings are totally divorced from the rest of Bosnia: Sarajevo may be unique; but it is not completely alien to its surroundings. City voices have been heard to claim that, before the war, 'we didn't even know who was Serb or Croat or Muslim, we were all just friends'. This doesn't seem an accurate description of the situation in which, I suggest, people were acutely aware of who was what. Other people's customs and traditions – *Uskrs* and *Vaskrs* (Croatian/Catholic and Serbian/Orthodox) and *Kurban Bajram*, coloured eggs brought to school by Serbian children and Ramazan baklava by Muslim children – were all noted and understood as signs of the differences. In spite of the oft-noted number of intermarriages, most marriages were made within the ethnic group. From this it does not, however, follow that the groups hated each other or had been doing so ever since the Second World War and merely waiting for a chance to get even. For the most part tolerance, goodwill and a conscious desire for cooperative and civil relationships filled the joints between the three populations. At the same time, non-ethnic differences, differences of class and status, of rural or urban origin, and of access to resources, were far more salient than much current analysis suggests.

Islam plays a central role in the popular understanding of Muslim identity but its meanings are diverse and differently understood and emphasized at different times, in different contexts and by different people. Islam is no monolith and implies no cast-iron relationships with Serbs, Croats, Albanians, Western Europe or the Middle East.

The terms *nacija* (loosely, nationality) and *vjera* (faith) are frequently used interchangeably; the answer to 'what's your *nacija*?' being, for example, 'Protestant', rather than 'British'. This does not, of course, mean that all Muslims were devout, and clearly individual Muslims and Muslim families greatly vary in their levels of religious observance. There are those who pray regularly, fast Ramazan, and so on, those who fast token days of Ramazan and participate in some religious rituals, and those who never pray and who drink heavily and openly. In themselves, however, such infringements of Islamic regulations say little about the role of Islam in self-perceptions. The consumption of alcohol no more prevents a Muslim being a Muslim than petty thefts stop a Catholic being a Catholic.

This is an important point, for – like the other religions of the region – Islam is not simply a set of clearly definable rules of practice and is not so understood by Muslims. Alongside detailed prescriptions for daily prayer, the annual Hajj, and so forth, Islam is also understood as a domain of loose moral imperatives – hospitality, cleanliness, generosity, honesty, compassion, courtesy, industry, and so on. This reliance on Islam as a moral system was very evident in the Muslim or Muslim-dominated neighbourhoods above Bascarsija. Here people greeted each other with *Merhaba* or *Aksam Hajrula* in place of the Serbo-Croatian *Dobar dan* or *Dobar vecer* used in the town centre. The neighbourhoods were self-consciously Muslim and Islamic, yet Islam was seen to lie less in ritual or theology than in life values. To have a dirty home, be mean with the guests, or gossip too much were far more pertinent signs of the inadequate Muslim than a failure to pray or fast. Rarely did Muslims evaluate each

other's actions in religious language. It was not *haram* (Arabic: forbidden by God) to slander someone, but *neposteno* or *ne valja* (Serbo-Croatian: dishonest, not good). It was not *sunnet* (Arabic: recommended by the Prophet and pleasing to God) to wash your hands before meals, but *Jino/valja* – nice/good. These values form part of a general field of morality which can potentially be seen as overlapping with that of non-Islamic or non-Bosnian Muslim societies.

In socialist Bosnia many self-confessed believers whose families had Party links could easily assert that, after all, Islam and Communism said the same things – work hard, don't cheat your neighbours, redistribute your wealth, and so on. These sorts of accommodations between Islam and Communism have been noted in other parts of the socialist bloc. In part they are born of necessity under unsympathetic or openly oppressive regimes, but they should not be viewed as utterly bogus concessions to the authorities, made through guilty self-delusion or with fingers crossed behind the back. As a moral system Islam is capable of being interpreted as related to other moral systems, and this process of interpretation did not stop with the end of one-party socialism.

Even the loose Islamic revival movement of the mid-1980s, largely composed of young people in their teens and twenties, relied heavily on Islam's nature as a system of values. Many of those who could be seen to fall within the domain of the revival were (or had been) students at Sarajevo's *medresas* or Islamic Theological Faculty. Of these some were urbanites and some from rural backgrounds, the latter's secondary or higher education made possible by the stipends and accommodation which religious academies could offer in a way that secular ones could not. Others were studying at the University or working as professionals – lawyers, doctors, architects, engineers, and so on. All were religiously observant and keen on acquiring or improving their knowledge of Arabic, the Quran, the hadiths and the Islamic world. Some, but by no means all, of the young

women had adopted headscarves and long dresses. But what largely dominated their conversation and behaviour was not religious prescriptions for specific action, but broader moral questions of modesty and respect. It was on this axis that they stressed their association with the wider Islamic world outside Yugoslavia. Turkish boys, for example, were deemed adept Quran reciters because proper family relations of obedience and respect provided them with an appropriate environment for learning.

In the same vein, the fairly widespread anti-Albanian feeling of the mid-1980s was supported by accusations that their Kosovan co-religionists were lazy, ungrateful, undisciplined and therefore somehow not properly Muslim. In this case, too, the loose field of morality was the idiom through which Bosnian Muslims constructed their relationships with non-Bosnian Muslims.

The late 1980s on

With the decline of one-party socialism and Serbia's increasing self-assertion, particularly over Kosovo, Muslim understandings began to change. Where the Albanians were concerned, images of nobility under oppression began to replace those of idle ingratitude, as Kosovo came to stand for less a threat to Yugoslav unity than a Serbian threat which might soon redirect itself towards Bosnia. At the same time, Muslims' identity as Europeans began to receive greater stress. In emphasizing their Europeanness, Muslims did not deny their Islamic identity. On the contrary, Islam was precisely understood as one of the things linking Bosnian Muslims to Europe.

The end of the cold war witnessed religious revivals within all three of Bosnia's religious communities. In Sarajevo 1990 and 1991 saw Muslims celebrating Ramazan and participating in religious rituals in greatly increased numbers. The old Islamic revival of the mid-1980s now appeared to be joined by new enthusiasts. The meeting of the two was sometimes the cause of conflicts and misunderstandings over motives and meanings. But

what is important is that the majority of those enjoying the new freedom of religious expression saw their activities as intimately related to their new European future. Whilst increased Islamic religious activity provided ammunition to those Serbian (and, to a lesser extent, Croatian) propagandists warning of the Muslims' desire for a fundamentalist state, for Muslims themselves the freedom to worship openly was one strongly associated with the values of the West. Moreover, the demise of Communism and the one-party regime which had inhibited religious activity was greeted as the opening of a door to freedoms and democracy intimately associated with ideas of that West and with eventual EC membership.

The restructuring of the Islamic religious establishment echoed this feeling. In its 1990 Constitution the *Islamska Zajednica* adopted Arabic names for various of its organs – *Mesihats* and *Rijasets* replaced the Serbo-Croatian *Staresinstvos* – and thus legitimated itself vis-à-vis the wider Islamic world. The restructuring of the *Zajednica* and the election of the first non-Bosnian *Reis-ul-Ulema* supported its new supranational, all-Yugoslav tone and aims. Above all, however, the new Constitution foregrounded the concept of democracy and of giving voice to Muslims at the lower levels of the establishment. Given the popular association of democracy specifically with the new Europe, this move stressed the Islamic community's relationship with the Western rather than the Eastern world.

The association of Muslim identity with European values was also evident in attitudes to the possibility of war. In summer 1990, when Belgrade-registered cars were reported vandalized on the Adriatic coast and Serbs feared to venture there, Sarajevans felt free to take their seaside holidays (and happy to enjoy the reduced prices). As war loomed and then began between Serbia and Croatici in 1991, many Sarajevan Muslims held fast to the belief that, while Serbs and Croats might fight, Muslims were too rational and civilized for such hostility and would remain calm and reasonable in the face of it all. (In retrospect many now

construe their reasonableness as plain naivety.) This rational and peaceful stance was one deemed entirely in keeping with the Europe which they wrongly believed would protect Bosnia's integrity, *as well as in accord with an Islam seen as the religion of tolerance and justice.*

With war approaching Bosnia itself, the idea of European-style civil values was interpreted by many Sarajevo Muslims as pertaining to Bosnians en masse, rather than Muslims in particular. When the shelling of Sarajevo commenced, a third interpretation began to emerge. Rather than Muslim civility versus non-Muslim aggression, or Bosnian civility versus non-Bosnian aggression, this was a conflict between urban civility and rural aggression, and the attackers were described as 'the peasants/ criminals/ hooligans' or just 'them' – but not as 'the Serbs'.

The war and the build-up to it have thus not been understood along the simple Muslim/Serb/Croat ethnic lines that the much-repeated phrase 'ethnic war' implies. Bosnian identity and rural versus urban identity are not ethnic identities. At the same time the interpretative emphasis placed on the ethnic identities by their bearers have changed over time.

Europe

Through its insistence on an essentialist treatment of ethnicity, in which Serbs, Croats and Muslims have immutable identities, Europe has played a part in legitimating nationalist leaders, highlighting the ethnic boundaries and creating the sort of ethnic war (one based on mutual and compelling hatred and fear) which, so it claims, had been there all along. The EC's role in endless 'peace' talks, its pre-war acceptance of ethnic 'cantonization', and its wartime negotiations with leaders whose precise aim is ethnic division and purity achieved through slaughter and exile – these have all contributed to a situation in which, the killing and destruction having lasted so long, poison rather than goodwill and tolerance now fills the joints between Bosnia's populations.

Simultaneously, Europe's stance has inevitably affected the internal 'content' of the ethnic identities. The flexibility of such identities and the way in which they reach out to incorporate or legitimate themselves in reference to other identities make them vulnerable. In the Muslim case I have suggested an increased pre-war emphasis on Muslim identity as European identity. This is also true of Serb and Croat identity in different ways. In the recent past both Croats and Serbs have seen themselves as reclaiming a European birthright of which either Communism or Tito himself had deprived them. The nature and bases of the claims vary – one drawing on the Austro-Hungarian legacy, Catholicism and anti-Communism, the other more on ancient battles with the Ottoman Turks. But both see and stress themselves as essentially European. And in their different ways both deny the Muslims' claim to such status – Serbia emphatically damning the Muslims' supposedly deep-rooted Middle Eastern militancy, while Croatia mourns their allegedly ineluctable transformation into mujahideen.

In the context of such Europhilia, the EC's apparent acceptance or rejection of competing claims to European identity matters. Given the current *de facto* partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Muslims' enclosure into a small central area of it, and Europe's continued passivity, it seems that the Muslim bid has been rejected. Accordingly, a renegotiation of Muslims' understanding of themselves in relation to Islam and to Europe is more or less inevitable. Contrary to popular opinion in Croatia and Serbia, this does not necessarily mean abandonment of the whole (read: 'skin-deep') idea of European identity and an espousal of Middle Eastern style fundamentalism. But, since the notion of Islam and Europe as joined by civic values, peace, rationality, and so on, has been shattered by the perception of Europe's failure to reciprocate, a path is paved for Muslims to reconstrue the nature of 'Europe' in less positive terms and the meaning of their own Europeanness in more radical terms.

In whatever direction Muslim (and Serb and Croat) self-perceptions have moved or will move, the process is not dictated merely by some pure, internal ethnic logic. It is because ethnic identities do not exist in isolation but are always constructed in relation to other identities – and in this case particularly by the idea of European identity – that the EC's stance cannot but be implicated in the shifting relationships and identifications of ex-Yugoslavia. (Should the Islamic world's future support rest solely on the idea of Islam oppressed by Europe, then it too will be implicated in Muslims' changing self-perception.) In this light the view that avoiding significant military intervention has in itself kept our hands clean (an idea shared by those on the Left who damn intervention as imperialism) appears in all its question-begging shabbiness. The merits and demerits of such intervention can be and have been rightly debated at length. But the notion that inaction equals distance from the dynamics of ethnicity and war holds as little water as Sarajevo's pipelines.

4 **Actually existing postcolonialism**

BILL SCHWARZ

From the start, there has always been an ambiguity in the academic literature on the postcolonial. Does the term 'postcolonial' refer to a historical process that has already occurred, such that we are currently living in a historical epoch 'after colonialism'? Or does the idea of the postcolonial refer not to the past but to the future; to a more intangible notion, encapsulating a desired state of affairs in which postcolonial times are yet to come? Are we already postcolonial? Or have we yet to become so?

From a strict historiographical point of view the answer might seem clear – and might explain, too, the impatience many postcolonial theorists seem to experience with history. The classic age of colonialism indisputably has come to an end. Whatever the continuing neocolonial or imperial dispositions of global power, and whatever the concomitant unevenness in the distribution of health, wealth and happiness, colonialism on the old model – the rapacious annexation of territories – has not only ceased, but the majority of once-colonized states have themselves won political sovereignty. We indeed inhabit a world 'after' colonialism.

But whatever the evident truth of historical reasoning like this, it is clearly too hard-boiled to resolve the dilemma. Although much postcolonial theory may have been prompted by the momentous historical experiences of Bandung, Algeria, Vietnam, and by the epoch of decolonization they collectively represent, carried too in the postcolonial critique is the

insistence that the internal mental structures of colonial power outlive their epoch. Habits of thought, from the most inconsequential practices of everyday life through to the most highly formalized systems of philosophical abstraction, still reproduce inherited and often unseen colonial mentalities. In matters of race and ethnicity, most of all, these older systems of thought gather and accumulate, allowing – in our contemporary post-colonial times – a bewildering variety of putatively racial truths to hold their ground in the metropolitan civilizations, apparently immune to the fact that the historical conditions which originally gave them life have come to their end. Postcolonial critiques have been most effective when they have been able to demonstrate this continuing afterlife of colonial mentalities.

This, then, might seem to resolve the underlying ambiguity. On the one hand, an orthodox historiographical solution is clearly too narrow and positivistic in inclination. It can't convincingly be asserted that postcolonialism has 'happened'. On the other, the founding assumptions of postcolonial theory are based on a complex understanding of historical time, in which past, present and future ('dreaming forwards', in Ernst Bloch's conceptualization) work not as discrete, isolated units, but as a complex, interacting unity. Yet postcolonial theorists have only ever been weakly concerned with 'what happened', and in practice overwhelmingly tend to work in a narrow (textual, literary) vein.

This resolutely anti- or ahistorical mode of thought is something I still find scandalous. But it is a complaint heard often enough before and doesn't require repeating here. The point, though, is not to admonish the theorists because in their telling of this or that story they miss the fine texture of an incident, or because historians can show them that what pertained in Northern Rhodesia didn't in Southern Rhodesia. To suggest this is to imply that everyone should work like a historian – which truly is not a sensible or desirable line to press. It is, rather, the tendency to attribute to others (to historians) a primitive conception of historical time which is the source of the problem. Ironically it

is the postcolonial theorists themselves who are most likely to flatten the complexities of the relations between past and present into a series of thin abstractions. In so doing they compromise their own best intentions. Indeed, it is nowadays historians, with an entire historiographical literature devoted to the practices of memory and to the coexistence of competing historical times, who often appear the more conceptually sophisticated. It is the historians who are thinking most deeply about *memories* of empire: not – or not just – about the presence of obvious social representations (fulminating against yet another bank-holiday television replay of *Zulu*), but in the more complex sense of memories which work by displacement and repression, and which always possess a mobility and quickness that compel them to disavow what they are.

And the questions ‘Are we already...?’ and ‘Have we yet to become...?’ are properly historical matters: they can’t be *resolved* conceptually, working only at a high level of abstraction. They suggest that what confronts us politically is less the postcolonial than ‘actually existing postcolonialism’ – a conceptual strategy which carries known political antecedents.

To think historically requires forsaking the singular abstraction – increasingly common – of ‘the postcolonial’. To think about divergent historical forms of postcoloniality means working through the political configurations of specific conjunctures. As the example of ‘actually existing socialism’ reminds us, the fusion of contradictory elements – progressive and regressive; democratic and authoritarian; popular and administered – is ultimately what proves most significant.

In the large corpus of academic writing on the postcolonial there is the assumption that the work of conceptual critique is allied to a democratic and popular politics. At their best, these critiques have been grounded in a true sense of emancipation. Principally, again, this has turned on questions of race and ethnicity. Conceptual critique has endeavoured to prise open the master-categories of race, in order to create alternative systems

of narration from which non-racial futures can be imagined. But it is not only a matter of race. Postcolonial theorists have sought to identify the interlocking capacities of colonial authority – in all their manifestations, private as well as public – in which the will to colonize and conquer has been cast. In this dimension of postcolonial theory lies the democratic promise underwriting its founding wager.

This, in turn, is linked to the issue of the popular. Implicit in some of the theorizations is the belief that postcolonial situations signal the opening of new possibilities for popular life. This is a line of argument which has been put with differing degrees of sophistication. At worst, it opens the way for an unthinking, banal populism. At best (in my view) it is as smart as anything around. The basic trajectories of this approach are familiar: in opposition to older structures of colonial authority (it is proposed) appear new inventive popular forms, diasporic and hybrid, symbolically canny, unpicking with unexpected bravura inherited master-systems of power. This is a mode of argumentation which has proved easy to traduce or parody – its most banal manifestations used to exemplify its most sophisticated. There are critics from many quarters. Even so, the basic drift of this approach seems to me right. And it seems to me that the figure who has thought this through in its most theoretically complex forms and who provides it with the most convincing emancipatory grounding is Stuart Hall. In effect, his post-Marxist reading of postmodernism converged with, and is now largely displaced by, his commitment to what is inadequately but reasonably summarized as postcolonial critique. Through Marxism, through various poststructuralist procedures, through postcolonialism comes a complex recasting of the popular. Given Hall's characteristic emphasis on the redemptive – popular and democratic – possibilities of the world decolonized, his conception of the postcolonial is one which looks to the future, as the promise or possibility of better things to come, albeit with anticipations in the present. Indeed he often appears to suggest that the break-up

of the colonial world *released* the potential for the creation of new vernacular forms whose outcome we have yet to witness.

We may also recall, however, that at a different moment in his public career Hall argued powerfully the degree to which in the Thatcher years the Right had won a political victory on the terrain of popular life and reconstituted its emotional economies. Thatcherism, he indicated at one point, represented a new instance of 'regressive modernization'.

Perhaps only in metropolitan England was it necessary to point out the potentially regressive features of modernization. But, in much the same way, there is no reason to assume that the popular dimensions of the postcolonial are necessarily progressive (if we can recoup, for a moment, an older vocabulary). This has proved obvious enough in the former colonies, where the many horrors and barbarisms visited upon peoples who have recently freed themselves from colonialism have a variety of different causes, not all of which can be attributed to the machinations of the neocolonial managers of the new global capitalist institutions. It has been less obvious in the commentaries on the erstwhile metropolitan nations.

Habits of mind are difficult to break. There is a kind of academic common sense now that assumes postcolonialism to be synonymous with a larger democratic project, subverting the legacies of the colonial epoch. It may be, at some point, that this habit becomes a conscious intellectual choice, although I think I doubt the wisdom of such a move. But while this habit of mind still holds, it is instructive to be reminded of contrary historical experiences in which the bid to leave behind the colonial epoch rested not on the dismantling of the colonial epistemes, but on their reassertion.

England's coming home

Imagine a scene outside a modest suburban house on the south coast of England in October 1941. A young army officer, having recently completed a short spell at the Staff College at

Camberley, is about to take up a posting in North Africa. He takes leave of his mother. In full uniform he marches the few paces to the front gate, about-turns in order to salute his parents, and then marches off up the street. This is the same man who, a few years earlier, took to concluding the letters he sent home from Sydney with the imperative 'GOD SAVE THE KING' and who – from the moment of appeasement – insistently referred to Neville Chamberlain as a 'traitor'. By the end of the following year, by then posted to India, his closing refrain in his letters had been extended: 'GOD SAVE THE KING (and Emperor of India)'.

Native readers will not be surprised to hear that the young soldier in question was Enoch Powell. In the 1930s and 1940s he embraced empire with a fervour which those with whom he worked professionally – in the academy, in the army and in politics – found puzzling, if not embarrassing. The empire entered deep into his inner life and represented an attachment which can only be described as passionate. He fell in love with India, 'head-over-heels in love' as he put it himself, schooling himself in the languages and civilizations of the colony. It was in India that he decided that his future had to lie in politics: following Edmund Burke, he came to the conclusion that India's destiny was to be decided at Westminster. He did indeed embrace a desperate desire to be viceroy. For a long time I thought this was no more than the usual hyperbole which surrounds Powell, but it turns out to be true: he wanted to be Lord Curzon reincarnated. In February 1946 – after a more tearful leave-taking, this time with his Indian bearer – he flew to Brize Norton; within twenty-four hours he had made contact with Conservative Central Office to begin his new career as a politician.

By the middle of the following year, however, India had been 'lost' (as convention had it in the metropolis). 'The premise of Powellism', wrote a political admirer, T.E. Utley, much later, 'is quite simply that the Indian Empire has been lost'.¹ For the next decade Powell lived with this defeat, his inventive mind looking for all manner of ways in which the empire, without its crowning

jewel, might be revived. By the time of the war with Egypt in 1956 he realized the game was up. 'It's over', was his new refrain. In one respect Powell was not alone in this. There were many mutterings, over too many whiskies, that it was all finished: a lachrymose self-indulgence ('It's all going to the dogs') is evident in the private sentiments of the political elite of the time, and produced the raw material for a new boom in satire. But politicians and state officials nevertheless continued energetically, well after Suez, to pursue imperial ambitions. (Suez, I should emphasize, did not mark the historical termination of empire.) Powell was distinct in organizing a politics, with its appointed philosophy, which *explicitly* sought to reimagine the postcolonial nation. Four months after Suez he declared: 'The Tory Party must be cured of the British Empire, of the pitiful yearning to cling to the relics of a bygone system ... the Tory Party has to find its patriotism again, and to find it, as of old, in "this England".'²

Between 1956 and 1968 (the year of his notorious 'Rivers of blood' political speech) Powell hesitantly but systematically created a political language which (as Utley understood) took as its premiss the end of British colonialism. In this – making 'after empire' *publicly* speakable – Powell, as politician, was unique. This is the first reason, symbolic or discursive if one chooses to argue in these terms, for regarding Powellism as postcolonial: not merely in the empirical sense that it appeared 'after empire', but that it took the predicament of the metropolis decolonized as its *raison d'être*.

I'll argue this by looking at two of his speeches. The first comes from April 1961, and was delivered to the arcane institution of the City of London branch of the Royal Society of St George.³ Significantly, it was this speech that the *philosophes* of Middle England at the *Daily Telegraph* chose to publish in its entirety on the occasion of Powell's death, nearly forty years after he first delivered it.

The argument is simple: historically, Powell asserted, colonial England was an aberration. In the beginning, there was England

'herself', coeval with the soil and mulch of the landscape, in which liberty – 'a thing called "Parlement"' – slowly, uniquely, took root. In the late nineteenth century, however, in the age of Rudyard Kipling and Sir John Seeley, a newfangled colonial nationalism was invented, driven by the conviction that the truest Englishman was to be found not in the home nation, but on the frontier of distant colonies. It was this England, colonial England, which in 1961 Powell was fast coming to perceive as a false, fabricated aberration from a history altogether more rooted, providential and true. And because this brought the end to an essentially false or ersatz conception of nationhood, Powell could claim it to be a moment of emancipation, not freeing the English from their history but, on the contrary, *returning* them to it:

So we today, at the heart of a vanished empire, amid the fragments of demolished glory, seem to find, like one of her own oak trees, standing and growing, the sap still rising from her ancient roots to make the spring, England herself. Perhaps after all we know most of England who only England know.

There was this deep, this providential difference between our empire and those others, that the nationhood of the mother country remained unaltered through it all, almost unconscious of the strange fantastic structure built around her...

Thus our generation is one which comes home again from years of distant wandering. We discover affinities with earlier generations of English, generations before the 'expansion of England', who felt no country but this to be their own. We look upon the traces which they left with a new curiosity, and the curiosity of finding ourselves once more akin with the old English.

England's diaspora, Powell was proposing, had come to its end. History and place had converged once more to allow a primal return to all that was true. The English, at last, were able to return home.

By any reckoning, this is a bizarre historical reconstruction. A while later Powell's conclusions came to be yet more curious, for he arrived at the belief that, in fact, the English had never really had an empire at all (in the traditional sense of things). (For those puzzled by the place of India in this new schema, Powell

possessed a ready answer: India, of course, was 'the exception which proves the rule'.⁴) Imperial England was only ever a myth, or dream.

Critics of Powell have largely ignored the fact that his thought possessed a rudimentary conception of collective mental misrepresentations. This owed less to the traditions inaugurated by Destutt de Tracy (leading to modern theorizations of ideology), and more to the elusive and tantalizing metaphors of Plato's *Republic*. English public life after empire, according to Powell, was dominated by those who could not see: by those whose vision was blocked as a consequence of living in a world of dream, nightmare, mirage, fantasy, hallucination, unreality, madness, schizophrenia – in a world, in other words, incapable of noticing that things had moved on. He, on the contrary, stood as a lone visionary, a tribune with the capacity to see the truth which everyday political rhetorics worked systematically to conceal. (On occasion this too could take a populist term: if the old ruling order were still constrained by the myopia of empire, the people had privileged access to the true historical situation.) The capacity to see was predicated on recognition that the colonial epoch had closed. In other words, to employ a rather different conceptual idiom, postcolonialism brought with it certain epistemological, or cognitive, possibilities.

In the Powellite *mise en scène* the royal road to truth depended on paying obeisance to the positioning of the nation, unencumbered by colonial excrescences, as the absolute index of what differentiated truth from falsehood. In the old conservative ideologies of the colonial period, nation, crown and empire were deemed to exist beyond the realm of politics: they were what civilization was, and thus could not be opened to political negotiation. It was basically these inherited beliefs that Powell recast in the 1960s. At the very moment in which the colonial legacy was repudiated, this bid to reaffirm the transcendent virtue of (English) nationhood reproduced at a stroke the basic cognitive structures of colonial thought. At this moment in

the Powellite odyssey, as Karl Marx might have put it, everything came to be inverted; everything turned into its opposite. Colonialism transmuted into postcolonialism, which by a vivid alchemy turned back into the essentials of colonialism. Or, to draw from a different theoretical system, which in our own times has perhaps a greater currency, while Powell gave every indication that he was *working through* the requirements of postcolonial civilization, he was in fact *acting out*, or repeating, an unconscious history which was only too well known. It is at this point that the profane – dangerous and authoritarian – consequences of these adventures in postcolonial abstraction can be seen for what they were: irrepressible.

‘The enemy within’

We can, at this point, fast-forward from 1961 to 1970, to look at the second of Powell’s speeches that concerns me here. The setting was Northfield, in Birmingham, the neighbourhood – just the other side of the Bristol Road – in which he had lived as a child. Here memory, Powell’s own, was peculiarly located, or its dispositions concentrated.⁵ Yet he opened his address not with Birmingham, but with Singapore. ‘When the *Prince of Wales* and the *Repulse* disappeared beneath the waters of the Gulf of Siam, at least we knew that Britain had suffered a defeat’, he told his West Midlands audience, referring to the disasters which presaged the collapse of Singapore in 1942. He continued:

Britain at this moment is under attack. It is not surprising if many people find that difficult to realise. A nation like our own, which has twice in this century had to defend itself by desperate sacrifice against an external enemy, instinctively continues to expect that danger will take the same form in the future. When we think of an enemy, we still visualise him in the shape of armoured divisions, or squadrons of aircraft, or packs of submarines. But a nation’s existence is not always threatened in the same way. The future of Britain is as much at risk now as in the years when Imperial Germany was building dreadnoughts, or Nazism rearming. Indeed the danger is greater today, just because the enemy is invisible or disguised, so that his preparations and advances go on hardly observed.⁶

The theme of the speech, and the name by which it goes in compilations, was 'the enemy within'. There was, Powell proclaimed, an enemy inside the nation, invisible to the people, and wilfully or unwilfully, ignored by those charged to govern the state. This enemy was depicted by Powell in the third person singular, in the masculine form, in the manner of antique military manuals: 'he' determined to destroy here, to outflank there, all the while seeking to secure ascendancy over 'his' victims. The tale told at Northfield was lurid, extravagant and wild in its putative appeal to a homely reasonableness. The enemy, plague-like, was all around, winning victories when nobody was looking, and breaking the moral foundations of the nation. The speech rehearsed the convictions which in these years Powell was making his own: that madness was reason and reason madness; that truth was lies and lies were truth. 'The public are literally made to say that black is white.'

The terminology of black and white was, of course, not fortuitous. It lay at the heart of the matter. Powell was outraged that there were those who could bring themselves to deny that 'the English are a white nation'. This he regarded as a 'heresy', the product of 'a sinister and deadly weapon' which entailed 'brainwashing by repetition of manifest absurdities'. In his overarching scenario of decline and anarchy, black immigration constituted a significant factor:

'Race' is billed to play a major, perhaps a decisive, part in the battle of Britain, whose enemies must have been unable to believe their good fortune as they watched the numbers of West Indians, Africans and Asians concentrated in her major cities mount towards the two million mark, and no diminution of the increase yet in sight.

But race signified more than immigration. It was, in Powell's imagination, the issue which bound together all the arenas of disorder, the single principle with the capacity to articulate all that threatened 'the peaceable citizen'. 'The exploitation of what is called "race"', claimed Powell, 'is a common factor which links the operations of the enemy on several different fronts.' Race,

in this larger sense, became a means for signifying ethics itself, for 'the battle of Britain' was to be 'fought and won in the moral sphere'. As in April 1968, Powell believed that he had no choice but to speak out. In the forthcoming election, he informed his audience, 'the people have it in their hands, perhaps for the last time, to elect men who will dare to speak what they themselves know to be the truth'.

This vision of decline and racial conflagration was predicated on memories of imperial loss. The sinking of the *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* represented a dramatic, definitive moment in the collapse of Britain's colonial power. The loss of Singapore more than a quarter of a century before gave life to the anxieties expressed by Powell in Northfield in 1970. Memories of Singapore ran deep in his imagination. Like many of his generation, he experienced the defeat inflicted by the Japanese on the colony as a terrible blow. Intellectually, he had always been aware of the magnitude of the defeat. In 1986 at a seminar at the Institute of Historical Research, in London, he revealed that at the end of 1942, while serving as a military intelligence officer, he had prepared a report entitled 'Peace with Germany now', in which he advocated two courses for future action. He argued, first, that the German theatre of war should be evacuated by the British (leaving 'the German people to deal with the German government'); and second, that all the empire's military forces should be turned to the Pacific, in order to recover Singapore and forestall any future threat of US hegemony in the far eastern regions of the British empire.⁷ Early in 1943 he sought a posting in the east so that he could be close to what he believed to be the decisive arena of the war.

Powell's memories of Singapore, however, also had a deeper subjective dimension. In 1938, preparing to take up his new post as professor of Greek at Sydney University ('at 25 the youngest professor in the Empire': this was his proud boast), he was one of two passengers to travel on the first scheduled Imperial Airways flying-boat service from Poole Harbour to Singapore, and thence by Qantas Empire Airways from Singapore to Sydney. While

travelling he read not the classics, as one might have expected, but a little Nietzsche. This journey – in which he witnessed his ‘world expanding with explosive speed’ – was, he remembered in his seventies, ‘a deeply formative experience. How formative I can understand now in retrospect.’⁸ It is not clear whether his departure followed the conventions of the colonial romance, with his mother on the quayside waving farewell to the disappearing son – though we do know that she organized his packing and ensured he took with him a warm cardigan and overcoat. His grief at leaving underwrites his published poems of the time, collected in the anthology *Casting Off*.

I wish the wound would bleed
Bleed till the flesh was white
For then the world could read
Our woe aright⁹

Between Crete and Indonesia all but one leg of his journey was conducted through the lands of the empire: ‘one was witnessing the ubiquity of a power on which the sun had not yet set’. ‘I saw; I felt; I marvelled.’ It was to Singapore that he kept returning. On a later trip, in March 1939, he recalled living ‘through the most horrible parting of my life. A friend in the Malay Civil Service, with whom I stopped over, was departing to China to acquire Cantonese at the same time as I departed for Australia. We both knew that we would never see one another again. He was killed when the Japanese stormed Singapore island.’¹⁰ The story of this parting was repeated on a number of occasions by Powell, including in the foreword to his *Collected Poems* some half a century later. This friendship marked an early love affair. Indeed, it is clear that the first stirrings of his desire to be transferred to Singapore derived from emotional, rather than strategic, considerations, ‘beckoned by the ghost of Thomas, living or dead’.¹¹ Long before he came to fall ‘head over heels in love with India’, Singapore and the imperial possessions of the Pacific – including Australia – had been active, passionate even, in his imagination.

In the old Labour heartlands of Midlands motor manufacturing in 1970, allusion to Powell's memories of the *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* might not have evoked much for the younger generations who were listening. But in other respects his audience – if we can extrapolate from shifts in voting structures and from other manifestations of popular politics – might well have proved more receptive. Powell was returning to the streets of his childhood. In his memory, as he told interviewers often enough, his childhood had been an idyllic time of emotional plenitude. In adult life, however, these same streets presented to him an image which he found altogether more alarming. Black immigration (he believed) had transformed his own remembered home. These streets, and many like them in adjacent neighbourhoods, he thought were ceasing 'even to be England'. What once had been experienced as real and homely had now transmuted into a more dangerous state of affairs which he experienced as unreal and unhomely. Given the psychic power of these feelings, only an authentically radical solution would suffice. When, in the myriad of letters Powell received in these years, and in the popular clamour one could hear incessantly in the media, he was eulogized as a saviour of the nation, it was obvious that he was being called upon to *do* something, just as St George slew dragons and King Richard faced the evil barons. What he had to do was clear enough: extirpate the problem, by removing the unwanted (non-white) immigrants from the territory of the nation.

This represented, in psychoanalytical terms, a confrontation with the uncanny. It was, however, more than a personal idiosyncrasy of Powell's. Powell encoded these experiences, powerfully, in expressly postcolonial terms, such that *all* turned on his memories of empire. If we were to follow his reasoning we would see that just at the moment when the English were able once more to imagine their nation, not as diaspora, but as home, they were confronted with a presence at home which could not have been more unhomely. But such memories of empire – or, more particularly, half-conscious, displaced memories of *being white* – were

the common inheritance for many of those who felt affective ties to the nation and to its history. Between 1968 and 1970 race did indeed become the articulating principle in which all manifestations of disorder and *dislocation* could be thought. The aftermath of Powell's so-called 'Rivers of blood' speech in 1968 produced an authentic crisis of the state, in which postimperial decline suddenly seemed to be an issue in popular life, as it hadn't before. Kobena Mercer is right to insist that in Britain Powell was the representative figure in the making of that 'other' '68.¹²

If the first reason for regarding Powell as a postcolonial thinker – albeit an apostle of the *other* post-colonialism – was his endeavour to craft an appropriate political and philosophical language, then the second is that his was a politics which incontrovertibly triggered a crisis of state. Powellism was not a matter of some free-floating discourse, in which his eccentric, mind-bending readings of English history were a question only of academic disputation. On the contrary, Enoch Powell became, in Gramscian terms, a political party in his own right. Powellism is the name we use to describe the first 'organic' crisis in the domestic polity *produced* by decolonization – by the historic process of Britain becoming postcolonial.

A third reason for seeing Powellism in this light is more speculative. The single most striking thing about Powell (and the principal reason why it is necessary to return to him) was the extraordinary popular irruption which accompanied his political experiments in the period after April 1968. It is difficult to think of any other comparable moment in twentieth-century Britain in which popular discontent intervened with such immediacy in the theatre of high politics, overriding convention and recasting what politics was. Powell told the stories of whites who believed themselves to have become racially dispossessed, and who believed their whiteness delivered not (as before) a certain grandeur, but instead a peculiarly acute sensation of homelessness and loss. They too told their own tales, in their own words, as never before, in letters to Powell and to other public figures, in

letters to the press, on television and radio, and in the countless informal, private and fleeting conversations which compose civil society. No one has been able adequately to explain this phenomenal release of popular energies. The high points of Powellism do seem to have been driven by a popular momentum which earlier had been inchoate, lacking in organization, channels or outlet. In part, this was a question of the movement from private to public: Powell himself broke open a space in public life in which these popular voices carried a new authority. But it is also tempting, though difficult to demonstrate convincingly, to establish a connection between the significance of these new vernacular forms and the disintegration in the metropolis of traditionally colonial structures of authority – politically, morally and intellectually.

To suggest more broadly that Powell can be regarded as a theorist of the postcolonial might seem (on the one hand) merely descriptive, without much analytical force, or (on the other) unnecessarily provocative. Much turns on definition. But minimally one could hold to the fact that postcolonialism in England was first definitively, popularly experienced as Powellism. To think in these terms disrupts the formalism which my opening questions – ‘Are we already...?’ or ‘Have we yet to become...?’ – invite. It requires us to think about actually existing historical forms, in all their contradictory, often unwelcome, complexities. More particularly, it necessitates inquiry into *conjunctural* histories. I think it could be shown that the crisis of Suez in 1956 was relatively under-determined, while the Powellite crisis of 1968 was spectacularly overdetermined. The year 1968 was exactly an occasion of organic crisis, which broke across the society as a whole, not as an external rupture – ‘out there’ – but at the very core of the domestic metropolis.

The postcolonial proconsul

This history cannot be reconstructed here, but a more abstract gloss may be appropriate. I suggested earlier that a great virtue of postcolonial theory (in its formal protocols at any rate) was the

attempt to theorize the complexity of historical time, and that in this memories of empire played a defining role. In discussing Powell, I tried to indicate how his political philosophy was governed by his own memories of empire, both memories which were systematized as 'proper history', and those too which were more elusive, fragmentary and which derived from his inner life. In arguing for the importance of a conjunctural reading of postcolonialism, I implied that in the crisis brought about by Powellism at the end of the 1960s, the past was peculiarly active in the present.

This, too, is difficult to argue convincingly. But if we return to the most celebrated attempt to think through the related issues of conjuncture and overdetermination – Althusser's essay 'Contradiction and Overdetermination' – it should come as no surprise to see that a prominent theme is that of historical memory.

Althusser set out to explore the conceptual means for thinking the interconnections between competing, or composite, historical times. This was what the concept of overdetermination promised. Its origins, we should recall, were in psychoanalysis and, more specifically, in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, linked to the subordinate concepts of displacement and condensation. It was employed by Freud to explore the connections between the manifest and the latent in dream-work, suggesting a kind of structuralist endeavour to uncover modes of historical time which remain subterranean and unseen. But just as in Freud, so too in Althusser: the concept of overdetermination is intimately connected to the work of memory. If, as Althusser claimed when he opened the essay, there existed an 'ambiguity' in Marx's inversion of Hegel, such an 'ambiguity' was reproduced in his own, *marxisant* appropriation of Freud. Althusser found Hegel's belief that 'every consciousness has a suppressed-conserved *past* even in its present' too choreographed a formulation. He was sceptical also of the Hegelian obsession with 'memories' and 'phantoms'. Yet, essentially, Althusser's own reading of overdetermination

depended not only on memory, but on the subjective dimensions of the inner life in which memories work. 'The past', he wrote, 'survives in the form of memory.' Or, in a wonderfully suggestive phrase, some distance from the expected materialist rendition, he identified the past as 'a whispered promise'. Necessarily, Althusser concluded, the present 'feeds off the shades of its past'.¹³

Whispered promises; shades; phantoms. ('The ghost of Thomas, living or dead...') This is as much the terrain of Freud as it is of Marx. But precisely the provisional, or incomplete, status of this theoretical exercise may well be a virtue, for it may anticipate a historical imagination which can pay due heed to interior as well as to exterior historical times. If the past does not merely shape the present, but is in some manner an active constituent *in* the present, then the pre-eminent site where this occurs is in subjective memory or, by extension, in Nora's *les lieux de mémoire*. And as I indicated at the outset, the most compelling concerns of postcolonialism are those which highlight the 'phantoms' of the colonial past in the present. In introducing Powell I have suggested that these memories of empire, especially in the period after colonialism, could assume unnervingly heterodox forms. But not only that: collective memories can intervene and dislocate the present, which is precisely what occurred in the Powellite moment at the end of the 1960s when the colonial past – remembered, repressed, displaced – was active in the present with peculiar intensity.

There is a paradox at work here. Powell was resolutely post-colonial, in the meanings I have described – more so than any comparable public figure. Yet he also reproduced with the greatest assiduity the essentials of his colonial past. He acted out, through his memories of empire, a properly proconsular mentality in which he took it upon himself to remind those at home – slack and compromising – of the first principles which they were abnegating. The oxymoron carries the truth of this: he was a postcolonial proconsul. England, decolonized and ethnically

plural, did not at all conform to Powell's heated, impossible imaginings of what home should be. Those who governed, and whom he believed should have been responsible for rectifying the situation, seemed to be appeasing the forces of dislocation. In such circumstances England was no longer England, the *heimlich* transmuting into the *unheimlich*. Powell's salvation lay in County Down, Northern Ireland. There at least (he surmised) the principles which had made English civilization English survived. 1688 and King Billy and the Protestant heritage and Unionism: together they formed the dynamo which made politics in County Down work. As he told a Unionist rally in Newtownards in County Down in May 1972: 'Every English Member [of Parliament] who has had the honour to address an audience in this province realizes at once that he has been catapulted out of a world of make-believe into the world of reality.'¹⁴ Two years later Powell made the political journey from the unrealities of post-colonial England to a providential land whose citizens lived the truth of history. In this journey we can see a dramatic example of thought being required to do impossible things. (History, of course, is replete with such manoeuvrings.)

This impossibilism of Powell's should not be written out of the historical record, as something so eccentric or idiosyncratic that it has only particular relevance. He was, in more ways than we care to think, representative. The way in which colonialism lived in his memory and infused his politics, even when he determined to repudiate every last vestige of the colonial past, is both unnerving and instructive. It reminds us of the contingent and unexpected presence of the colonial past in the postcolonial present, and of the *mobility* of these memories.

This is not to suppose that he possessed the last word. If the high point of Powellism, as a popular movement, occurred in the specific historical conjuncture of 1968–70, thereafter there occurred a 'second' postcolonial irruption with the domestic life of the erstwhile metropolis. In 1981–82, as a response to the prevailing Powellite ordering of the public cultures of

postcolonial England, there arose out of a seemingly repetitious, infernal history a new set of historic possibilities, created precisely from that indigenous black culture which felt itself to be most cornered. A powerful cultural renaissance emerged, specifically attuned to the peculiarities of British life, which only tangentially touched the formal institutions of political society. From the specificities of this historical experience there appeared new intellectual means for conceptualizing the workings of ethnicities, and of the civilizations in whose name they worked. Though these theories had been formed from a specific historical experience, they could also serve more general purposes – not only for the first-generation sons and daughters of black immigrants to Britain, but for the white inhabitants too. In a word, abstracting from the immigrant experience provided a means for imagining what England decolonized might look like. Different memories could come to life and interrupt historical patterns of repetition.

This history, too, forms part of the postcolonial present.

Notes

- This article is based on a talk given at the Radical Philosophy Conference, '30 Years of Radical Politics and Philosophy', held at Birkbeck College, London, 13 May 2000.
1. T.E. Utley, *Enoch Powell*, William Kember, London, 1968, p. 50.
 2. Quoted in John Ramsden, *The Making of Conservative Party Policy: The Conservative Research Department Since 1929*, Longman, London, 1980, p. 213.
 3. I have used the text as published by the *Daily Telegraph*, 9 February 1998. The date of this address (22 April 1961) is often cited wrongly.
 4. Powell's critical speech in this regard was delivered in Dublin in 1964; it is reproduced in Enoch Powell, *Freedom and Reality*, Batsford, London, 1969. Tom Nairn's early essay, 'English Nationalism: The Case of Enoch Powell', first published in *New Left Review* in 1970 and reprinted in his *The Break-up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-nationalism*, Verso, London, 1981, remains one of the best accounts.
 5. I have been influenced here by the work of Pierre Nora, though I draw different conclusions. See Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, 2 vols, Columbia University Press, New York, 1996 and 1998. For a fine reading, see Nancy Wood, *Vectors of Memory: Legacies of Trauma in Postwar Europe*, Berg, Oxford, 1999.
 6. Enoch Powell, 'The Enemy Within', in John Wood, ed., *Powell and the 1970 Election*, Elliot Right Way Books, Kingswood, Surrey, 1970.
 7. Enoch Powell, 'British Conservatism, 1951–1960', seminar at the Institute of Historical Research, University of London, 21 May 1986.
 8. Enoch Powell, *Reflections of a Statesman*, Bellew, London, 1992, p. 97; and Enoch Powell, 'Long Haul Back to a World Apart', *Daily Telegraph*, 15 October 1988.
 9. Enoch Powell, *Casting Off and Other Poems*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1939.
 10. Powell, 'Long Haul Back'.
 11. Quoted in Simon Heffer, *Like the Roman: The Life of Enoch Powell*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1998, p. 70.
 12. Kobena Mercer, *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies*, Routledge, London, 1994.
 13. Louis Althusser, 'Contradiction and Overdetermination', in *For Marx*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1969. An impressive conceptual reading of postcolonialism conjuncturally can be found in David Scott, 'The Permanence of Pluralism', in Paul Gilroy, Lawrence Grossberg and Angela McRobbie, eds, *Without Guarantees: In Honour of Stuart Hall*, Verso, London, 2000.
 14. Speech at Unionist rally, Queen's Hall, Newtownards, County Down, 6 May 1972; typescript in the library of the London School of Economics.

5 Children of postcommunism

BORIS BUDEN

A curious set of metaphors marks the jargon of postcommunist transition: *education for democracy; classrooms of democracy; democratic exams; democracy that is growing and maturing, but that might still be in diapers or making its first steps or, of course, suffering from children's illnesses.*¹ This language of postcommunism discloses a paradox that points at what is probably the greatest scandal of recent history: those who proved their political maturity in the so-called 'democratic revolutions' of 1989–90 have become thereafter, overnight, children! Only yesterday, they succeeded in toppling totalitarian regimes in whose persistency and steadfastness the whole so-called 'free' and 'democratic' world had firmly believed, until the very last moment, and whose power it had feared as an other-worldly monster. In the struggle against the communist threat, that world had mobilized all its political, ideological and military forces, its greatest statesmen and generals, philosophers and scientists, propagandists and spies, without ever really frightening the totalitarian beast. Yet, despite that, it calls those who chased it away with their bare hands 'children'. Only yesterday, those people got world history going again, after it had been lying on its deathbed, and helped it to walk upright again, after so long. Yet today, they themselves must learn their first steps. Only yesterday, they taught the world a history lesson in courage, political autonomy and historical maturity, yet today they must assert themselves before their new self-declared masters as their obedient pupils. Only yesterday,

they were the saving remedy for fatally ill societies; today, they themselves suffer from children's illnesses, which they must survive in order to become capable of living. What miracle happened overnight? What wizard turned these people into children?

Of course, it was politics. The child that was suddenly recognized in these mature people is defined neither by an early stage of psychological development that was never really abandoned, nor as a result of the psychopathological phenomenon of infantile regression, but as a political being, a *zoon politicon* par excellence.

An ideology called 'transitology'

The human being as a political child offers itself as the almost perfect subject of a democratic restart. Untroubled by the past and geared totally to the future, it is full of energy and imagination, compliant and teachable. It emanates freedom as though its pure embodiment, but actually it is not free at all. A child is dependent; it must be guided and patronized by adults. However, this only makes it all the more suitable for serving society, as the perfect ground for a new beginning. It neutralizes all the contradictions that the sudden irruption of freedom lays bare in society, above all between those who rule and the ruled. There is no relation of domination that seems so natural and self-evident as the one between a child and its guardian, no mastery so innocent and justifiable as that over children. One does not take their freedom away, but suspends it temporarily, postpones it, so to speak, for the time being. A patronized child as political being enjoys a sort of delayed freedom. And in case one day the promise of freedom turns out to be a delusion, one can always say that it was just a children's fairy tale.

The repressive infantilization of the societies that have recently liberated themselves from communism is the key feature of the so-called postcommunist condition. It comes to light in the ideology of the postcommunist transition, a peculiar theory that

addresses itself to the task of understanding and explaining the postcommunist transition to democracy. Here, cynicism becomes (political) science. From the perspective of this political science, postcommunism is understood above all as a phase of transition – that is, as a process of transformation of an ‘actually socialist’ (*realsozialistisch*) society into a capitalist democratic one.² Political science finds no reason to understand this transition in terms of a specific historical epoch. It lacks basic identity features: a specific postcommunist political subject or system, for instance, and a specific postcommunist mode of production, or form of property. In fact, political science does not need the concept of postcommunism at all. It prefers instead the aforementioned concept of ‘transition to democracy’ and it even develops within this framework a special discipline with the task of studying this process: ‘transitology’. It is based on the cynical idea that people who won freedom through their own struggle must now learn how to enjoy it properly. The meaning of this paradox goes far beyond the historical situation in which the postcommunist societies in Eastern Europe found themselves after 1989.

The concept of transition was introduced by orthodox political scientists in the late 1960s and early 1970s to explain various cases of regime change, principally in South America and Southern Europe. Transition originally meant nothing more than ‘an interval between two different political regimes’, as a minimalistic definition from 1984 put it.³ This transition was always a ‘transition from’: ‘from authoritarian rule’, for instance, in the title of the book by O’Donnell, Whitehead and Schmitter. Basically, at that time, political science always reflected on the phenomenon of regime change retrospectively. It tried to draw lessons from historical experience *ex post*. It was not so interested in the future because the outcome of this sort of transition was more or less open. It did not necessarily end in a democracy; an authoritarian regime could be transformed into another form of authoritarian rule. At that time, it was still conceivable that a military dictatorship in South America might be replaced by a

Marxist or even a Maoist dictatorship. The Chilean people, for example, democratically decided to embark with Allende on a form of 'socialist democracy', but the military junta turned them in a completely different direction.

In those days, for political science, the world was still quite complex: there were not just two competing ideological-political systems and military blocs, but also a series of anti-colonial movements in the 'Third World', providing for a certain contingency of the political. At that time, it still seemed as though there was a choice, as though history had an open end. By the end of the 1980s something had changed, and transitology began to understand its topic differently. The process of political transformation was now to be determined in advance. Its goal is always already known – incorporation into the global capitalist system of Western liberal democracy. From that point on, the concept of transition has been almost exclusively applied to the so-called postcommunist societies and denotes a transition to democracy that began with the historical turn of 1989–90 and continues, more or less successfully, mostly in Eastern Europe. This condition is familiar to the 'children of communism'. They grew up with the logic of historical determinism. However, it was the moving force of class struggle that was manoeuvring society into a better, classless future then. To be free meant, at that time, to recognize the iron laws of history and to yield to them. The trail to a better communist future was not only clearly blazed but also unavoidable.

Nowadays, they are told, they must have a similar experience; only this time, it is *the General Law of History* they have to obey unconditionally. The goal is clearly and distinctively set and its final attainment is guaranteed in advance. According to the new ideology of transition, there are no major obstacles on the way to democracy, so long as one strictly adjusts to the objective, external factors – economic, cultural, institutional, and so on. Sometimes a geographical position will suffice. 'Geography is indeed the single reason to hope that East European countries

will follow the path to democracy and prosperity', writes one of the transitologists, who understands politics only as a struggle for control over external factors: 'if we really control economic growth and the institutional setting, it is very likely that democracy will occur.'⁴

Others go a step further. Our way to democracy is determined by nature itself. It is 'a natural tendency and therefore not difficult to achieve'.⁵ Even the very idea of politics is based in Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection.⁶ The author of this Darwinist theory of democracy, Tutu Vanhanen, also believes that democracy is universally measurable. So he introduced the so-called Index of Democratization (ID) that shows us on which level of democratization a society is situated. Accordingly, he constructed also a ranking of democratic societies. In this list, which he created shortly before the collapse of communism, he classified 61 countries as democracies, 5 as so-called 'semi-democracies' and 81 as 'non-democracies'. Only countries that earned more than 5 ID points were classified as truly democratic. Those under that level were authoritarian. The two poles 'authoritarian rule' and 'really existing freedom' (i.e. liberal democracy) define a clear line of historical development: from authoritarianism to democracy. The transition is now teleologically determined – that is, designed from the perspective of its intended result – and consists of climbing up the scale of democratization to the top, the condition of realized freedom in the system of liberal democracy. One only has to follow the law of nature.

Authority on one side and freedom (i.e. autonomy) on the other – these two poles also determine the ideal of an enlightened, modern education: the development of an immature child, still dependent on an authority, into an autonomous, mature citizen of a free society. According to Vanhanen, the most important factors that affect his Index of Democratization are competition and participation. His formula is simple: the more democratic the system, the higher the level of participation

and competition. The latter stands for the openness of political possibilities, for a pluralism of interests – that is, of political and ideological options. Under ‘participation’ we should understand voluntary involvement of citizens in political life and in making political decisions. A fully mature democracy requires mature democrats capable of autonomous thinking and acting.

Under these conceptual premisses, the process of postcommunist transition appears as an educational process following the ideal of education for maturity and responsibility. However, it also reflects all the contradictions of this old Enlightenment concept.

Education for immaturity and irresponsibility

The analogy between the historical development of humanity and the growing up of a child (its consciously controlled education) is, as is well known, an invention of the Enlightenment. Indeed, enlightenment is nothing but a transition from immaturity to maturity, or, as we read in the first sentence of Kant’s famous essay from 1784, ‘man’s emergence from his self-imposed immaturity’, which he defines as ‘inability to make use of one’s own understanding without direction’.⁷ In the same sense that the immaturity is ‘self-imposed’, the maturity too should be achieved as a result of one’s own action. One cannot be simply declared mature – that is, released from a tutelage, be it nature, God or some master, which is the original meaning of the idea of emancipation as an acquittal, a release from paternal care, being freed from bondage. The Enlightenment idea of a transition to maturity has more of a reflexive sense, a self-emancipation. Of course, this transition should never be mistaken for a revolution. Kant’s concept of Enlightenment implies an emancipation that does not take place through a revolutionary leap, but rather as a reform in the manner of thinking (*Denkungsart*), as a continuous progression which alone is capable of securing the identity of its subject, as the subject of Enlightenment.⁸

In historical developments after Kant, the Enlightenment ideal of maturity – and with it the perception of emancipation

as a long-term process with an open end – was pushed more and more into the background. Another idea of emancipation took its place. Emancipation was understood now as an act of liberation from an unjustly imposed domination. The goal of emancipation is not any more a mature man but rather a society free of domination. With this move ‘maturity’ has lost the emphatic meaning of emancipation.

Curiously it was not until 1945 that interest in the concept re-occurred. Of course, this was the time of a historic transition: from fascist dictatorship to democracy. The traumatic historical experience of the masses, which had blindly followed their Führers into the catastrophe, made the idea of autonomous, mature and responsible men and women attractive again. ‘Maturity’ was now recognized as a precondition for democracy.⁹ After a long historical separation ‘maturity’ and ‘emancipation’ met again. This also influenced postwar philosophical reflection. Habermas, for instance, attached the emancipatory knowledge-interest to an interest in maturity. At the same time, pedagogy discovered the concept of ‘maturity’; it became the goal of education, the very principle of an emancipatory educational science. The post-fascist transition envisioned the ideal of mature and responsible citizens as the final cause of the construction of a new, democratic society. It is no wonder that the process of postcommunist transition finds itself committed to the same ideal. Finally, the new condition understands itself as post-totalitarian – liberating itself ideologically and historically from both ‘totalitarianisms’, fascist and communist: the so-called ‘double occupation’ – a retroactive equalization of two ideologies and political movements that in historical reality fought each other mercilessly.

The postcommunist ideal of mature and responsible citizenship has been nowhere so clearly employed as in the development of so-called ‘civil society’, which, it is believed, is the true subject of democratic life, the social substratum of all democratic values, justice and well-functioning public and human rights. This civil society is supposed to be very weak in the East European

societies liberated from communism. It is still 'in diapers', one might say, which is the reason it has to be first educated, trained, developed, got going.¹⁰ Surprisingly, nobody at the time asked the question: who, if not the civil societies of Eastern Europe brought the *ancien régime* to collapse? What was Solidarity in Poland if not the paradigmatic institution of – a resisting, struggling and radically world-changing – civil society par excellence? How has it suddenly become so weak if yesterday it had been able to overthrow communism? Who has put the Polish workers in diapers, all those brave men and women who initiated the democratic revolution, withstood the brutal repression of the counter-revolution and carried the struggle for democracy on their shoulders until the final victory? Who – and in whose interest – has put them thereafter in children's shoes, diagnosed their children's illnesses, sent them to school and to exams?

These were the cynical ideologues of transition, the masterminds of the postcommunist transformation, as we can call them. However, their cynicism has followed a logic, the logic of domination. If 'education for maturity and responsibility' is propagated in the interest of domination and thereby turns into an endless process about whose possible conclusion the educators alone decide, then the call for 'maturity and responsibility' no longer serves, as Robert Spaemann writes, 'to enlarge the circle of the mature, but rather the circle of those who are for now declared immature'.¹¹ Thus the child metaphors that are so typical of the jargon of postcommunist transition turn out to be a symptom of a new power relationship. They point clearly to a repressive incapacitation or putting under tutelage of the true subject of the 'democratic turn' and to its retroactive desubjectivation. We are talking about a constellation for which those words of Adorno, from his radio talk on 'Education for Maturity and Responsibility', still hold true, namely that 'in a world as it is today the plea for maturity and responsibility could turn out to be something like a camouflage for an overall keeping-people-immature'.¹²

Again, in whose interest does it happen? Who puts the protagonists of the historical change under tutelage, who robs them of their subject-status? The question is as old as the Enlightenment concept of maturity. Hamann put it directly to Kant: 'Who is ... the vexed guardian [*der leidige Vormund*]?'¹³ He saw him in Kant himself, or, more precisely, in the gestalt of the Enlightener. Today, these are the Western onlookers who didn't take part in the democratic revolutions of 1989–90. Far from meeting the deeds of the protagonists of the East European democratic revolutions with the 'wishful participation which borders on enthusiasm'¹⁴ with which Kant's passive spectators once welcomed the French Revolution, they reacted to the overthrow of communism with a cynical 'participation' that reveals the wish for power and domination. In fact, they recognized in that historical event, likewise Kant's spectators of the downfall of the feudal absolutism of 1789, a 'progress in perfection' in terms of a 'tendency within the human race as a whole', but at the same time regarded this same tendency as having been long ago fulfilled in their own reality and therefore, speaking Hegelian, already historically sublated. 'You want a better world, but the better world are we' was the answer of the Western spectators to the democratic revolutions in Eastern Europe. In this sense, they are completely different from those who in 1789 so enthusiastically welcomed the news from Paris. While the latter caught sight of their own dream in the revolutionary reality of others, the former recognized in the revolutionary dream of the other nothing but their own reality.

The consequences of this difference could not be more radical. Those who finally crowned their struggle for freedom with victory in Eastern Europe have become, almost overnight, losers. This was not the effect of black magic but rather of hegemony. It is hegemony that made true winners out of the Western spectators, not only over communism but at the same time also over the protagonists of the revolution that brought down communism. Let us hear the declaration of victory in the words of this hegemony itself:

The armies of the winners did not, it is true, occupy the territory of the losers. Still, given the nature of the conflict and the way it ended, it was logical for the losers to adopt the institutions and beliefs of the winners. It was logical in particular because the outcome represented a victory of the West's methods of political and economic organization rather than a triumph of its arms.¹⁵

It is not a coincidence that Michel Mandelbaum, the author of these words, and his colleague, political scientist John Mueller, speak explicitly of imitation as being the best way to democracy.¹⁶

It could not be worse: not only are the protagonists of the democratic revolutions robbed of their victory and made losers; at the same time, they have been put under tutelage and doomed blindly to imitate their guardians in the silly belief that this will educate them for autonomy. It is not only the arbitrariness of the new rulers, but above all the logic of their rule, that reveals itself here.

Education for stupidity

The notion 'children of communism' is therefore not a metaphor. Rather, it denotes the figure of submission to the new form of 'historical necessity' that initiates and controls the process of the postcommunist transition. On these premisses, the transition to democracy starts as a radical reconstruction out of nothing. Accordingly, Eastern Europe after 1989 resembles a landscape of historical ruins that is inhabited only by children, immature people unable to organize their lives democratically without guidance from another. They see themselves neither as subjects nor as authors of a democracy that they actually won through struggle and created by themselves. It has been expropriated from them through the idea and practice of the postcommunist transition, only to return now from the outside as a foreign object that they must reappropriate in a long, hard and painful process. In the strange world of postcommunism, democracy appears at once as a goal to be reached and a lost object. Thus for the 'children of communism' the prospect of a better future opens up only from a melancholic perspective. No wonder, since

their postcommunist present so remarkably resembles their communist past. It doesn't give them free choice. The 'children of communism' remain what they once already were, namely marionettes in a historical process that takes place independently of their will and drags them with it to a better future. So they are very familiar with this strange form of social life we call 'transition'. As is well known, so-called actually existing socialism was, according to its ideological premisses, nothing but a sort of transition-society from capitalism to communism. Thus, one form of transition has replaced another. However, both the absolute certainty and the pre-given necessity of the historical development have remained the constant of the transition.

As a result, the question of the future in postcommunism is considered as already answered, and the question of the past does not make sense. One does not expect the children of communism to have a critically reflected memory of the communist past. It is precisely for this reason that they have been made into children, namely in order *not* to remember this past. As children, they don't have one. Paradoxically, it is only in postcommunism that one gets a dubious impression that communism actually never existed. Already, in 1991, Jean-Luc Nancy spoke about the anger one is overwhelmed with when hearing all this empty talk about 'the end of communism'.¹⁷ The belief that history is now finally finished with Marxism and communism, and simply so, he found ridiculous:

As if history, our history, could be so inconsistent, so phantasmic, so flaky [*floconneuse*] to have carried us along for one hundred and fifty years on clouds that dissipate in a moment. As if error, pure, simple, and stupid error could be thus corrected, regulated, mobilized. As if thousands of so-called 'intellectuals' were simply fools, and especially as if millions of others were even more stupid as to have been caught in the delirium of the first.¹⁸

It is not so much the suppression of communism as a historical fact, the erasure of the communist past with all its intellectual and political complexity from the historical consciousness of postcommunism, that evokes Nancy's indignation and

concern, but rather the immense ignorance with which the postcommunist world refuses to wonder about this past and its afterlife, or to ask: 'Why did this all happen?' Nancy sees in this the true, almost epochal stupidity of the postcommunist turn.

Of course, children are not stupid. However, one can make them stupid, or, more precisely, one can educate them for stupidity. In this respect, a hundred years ago, Freud wrote of intellectual inhibitions that culture implants in its pupils through education to make them more obedient and compliant. He differentiated three types of such thought-blockage – the authoritarian, the sexual and the religious – to which correspond three 'products of education', namely the good subjects, the sexually inhibited and religious people. He understood these forms of intellectual atrophy (*Verkümmerung*), as he also called it, as effects of *Denkverbot*, a ban imposed on men and women in their childhood, a ban on thinking about what was most interesting to them. In Freud's time, it was above all the suppression of sexuality that had become the self-evident task of education. Once the *Denkverbot* was successfully implemented in the realm of sexuality, it was extended to other spheres of life, becoming in this way the most important character trait of the whole personality.

What was at that time sexuality has become in the world of postcommunism politics. While the children of communism are virtually encouraged by their educators to liberate themselves sexually and to come out, as loudly as possible, with their hitherto suppressed sexual identities, to embrace unconditionally all secular values, and to become (instead of good subjects of the totalitarian state) self-conscious, free acting members of a democratic civil society, their liberated intellect seems to have no business being in the realm of the political. It is as though there is nothing there it can wonder about. As though all political questions have been correctly answered long ago; as though the only thing left to think about is how properly to implement them, how to imitate, as truly as possible, the pre-given role models and how to obediently follow the wise word of the

guardian. It seems that the well-known dialectic of enlightenment, now from its political side, has caught up with the world of postcommunism. From being an education for maturity and responsibility that had been implemented to serve the new power, it has become an education for political stupidity. It has turned Kant's ideal upside down and puts its trust in precisely those people who are not able to use their intellect without guidance from another. Thus, the stupidity that Nancy ascribes to the postcommunist turn is actually an effect of this *Denkverbot* that has been imposed on the political *ratio* of postcommunism. It is above all in a political sense that people in postcommunism have been put under tutelage, made into children, and finally made into political fools.

This insight does not have to be taken as a reason for indignation but should rather motivate maturity. The 'child' as the leading political figure of postcommunism is much more than simply an instrument of the new hegemony. It is of structural importance for the fantasy of a new social beginning that shapes the world of postcommunism so decisively. As a sort of biopolitical abstraction of the transitional society, it takes over the role of a subject that is freed from all the crimes of the communist past, so that it can enter any new social relation (including that of domination) morally clean. Moreover, as 'child' it does not have to take responsibility for the crimes of postcommunism itself: for the criminal privatization in which the wealth of whole nations has become the property of the few, almost overnight; for the new, postcommunist pauperization of the masses with all its social and individual consequences; for historical regressions that in some places have thrown the postcommunist societies, economically, culturally and morally, back below the levels that had already been reached under communism; and, finally, for all the nationalisms, racisms, fascism, bloody civil wars, and even genocides. All these phenomena appear today as unavoidable childhood illnesses, or, to put it bluntly, as unpleasant but harmless dirt on the diapers of the newborn liberal-democratic society.

Do not forget: contradiction and resistance

The 'child' in postcommunism is a sort of ground zero of society on which every catastrophe, the one inherited from the past as well as the new, self-created one, can be recompensed. It is an instance of a primal social innocence thanks to which it becomes possible to integrate everything that happens, including 'the inadmissible, the intolerable' (Nancy) into a new heroic Robinsonade; and to retell it as a universally comprehensible narrative about an innocent restart. In the ideological figure of the innocent child, liberal-democratic capitalist society enters the age of its unconditional ideological reproducibility. Even the most distant island can become for a time its cradle, no matter what the cost. Finally, infantile innocence has a constitutive effect for the whole horizon of individualistic (juridical) bourgeois ideology in the era of its globalization. It helps to reduce the antagonistic, political truth of human history to a relation that is structured according to the juridical pattern, the relation between perpetrators and innocent victims. One looks into history only with a sort of forensic interest, as into a corpse that can provide useful information for the court proceedings.

Hegel knew that only a stone, as metaphor of 'non-action' ('not even ... a child'), is innocent.¹⁹ In this sense the fantasy of the innocent new beginning of postcommunist society is possible only from the perspective of a historical development that has been brought to a standstill and has frozen in the figure of a child as its political subject. Here, in the moment of historical transition, non-freedom is being replaced by a freedom that needs children, but only to deny itself to them.

It is therefore no wonder that, as Nancy emphasizes, one reacts to the cynicism of the time with anger. In the anger that postcommunist triumphalism provokes he saw the political sentiment par excellence, concretely, a reaction to 'the inadmissible, the intolerable'.²⁰ It is the expression of a refusal, of a resistance that goes far beyond what is reasonable. The anger Nancy talks about is political because it is enraged over the

reduction of the political to an 'accommodation and influence peddling' that in postcommunism determines the frame of the historically possible. The anger opens a dimension of the political that unfolds only in breaking out of that frame. It is therefore the true messenger of a maturity to come that alone can put paid to the postcommunist tutelage.

It is in an 'education for protest and for resistance' that, according to Adorno, the 'only real concretization of maturity' lies.²¹ He ended his talk on education with a warning – which remained literally his last public words, since he died a few weeks later – a warning that can serve as a postscript to the ideology and practice of the postcommunist transition. It is precisely in the eagerness of our will to change, Adorno argued, which we all too easily suppress, that the attempts to actively change our world are immediately exposed to the overwhelming force of the existent and doomed to powerlessness. Thus 'Anyone who wishes to bring about change can probably only do so at all by turning that very impotence, and their own impotence, into an active ingredient in their own thinking and maybe in their own actions too.'²²

The repressively infantilized child in us is nothing but a pure embodiment of our political and historical powerlessness in the ideal world of postcommunism, which, in a seizure of an epochal megalomania mistakes itself for the realization of all dreams about freedom. The only possible exit from this self-inflicted immaturity is to protest against it and to resist.

Notes

- This article was first published as 'Als die Freiheit Kinder brauchte', in Boris Buden, *Die Zone des Übergangs: Vom Ende des Postkommunismus*, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 2009, pp. 34–51. Translation is by the author. Another chapter of the book, 'The Post-communist Robinson', is available in the catalogue of the 11th Istanbul Biennial, *What Keeps Mankind Alive: The Texts*, Istanbul, 2009, pp. 169–74.
1. I owe the reference to child metaphors to Dejan Jović, 'Problems of Anticipatory Transition Theory: From "Transition from..." to "Transition to..."', presented to the conference 'The Concept of Transition', Zagreb, 22–23 April 2000.
 2. Here I draw again on Dejan Jović's lecture. I thank the author for providing me with its full text.
 3. Guillermo O'Donnell, Laurence Whitehead and Philippe Schmitter, eds, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore MD, 1986, p. 3.
 4. Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991, p. ix.
 5. John Mueller, 'Democracy, Capitalism, and the End of Transition', in Michael Mandelbaum, ed., *Postcommunism: Four Perspectives*, Council on Foreign Relations, New York, 1996, p. 117.
 6. Tutu Vanhanen, *The Process of Democratization: A Comparative Study of 147 States, 1980–88*, Crane Russak, New York, 1990, p. vii.
 7. Immanuel Kant, 'An Answer to the Question: "What is Enlightenment?"', in *Practical Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996, p. 17.
 8. Manfred Sommer, *Identität im Übergang: Kant*, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 1988, p. 123.
 9. *Ibid.*, pp. 130ff.
 10. Those democratic activists in Eastern Europe who tried during the 1990s to get financial support from the West for their projects simply could not avoid the phrase 'development of civil society' in their applications. It was as though this phrase was a sort of universal key for opening the cash boxes of the 'free and democratic world'.
 11. Robert Spaemann, 'Autonomie, Mündigkeit, Emanzipation. Zur Ideologisierung von Rechtsbegriffen', *Kontexte* 7, 1971, pp. 94–102, here p. 96. Quoted in Sommer, *Identität im Übergang*, p. 133.
 12. T.W. Adorno, *Erziehung zur Mündigkeit*, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 1970, p. 143; T.W. Adorno and Hellmut Becker, 'Education for Maturity and Responsibility', *History of the Human Sciences*, vol. 12, no. 3, 1999, pp. 21–34.
 13. Johan Georg Hamann, *Briefwechsel*, vol. V, ed. V.W. Ziesemer and A. Henkel, Wiesbaden, 1955, pp. 289–92. See Sommer, *Identität im Übergang*, p. 125.
 14. Immanuel Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties* [1798], trans. Mary G. Gregor, Abaris, New York, 1979, p. 153.
 15. Michel Mandelbaum, 'Introduction', in Mandelbaum, ed., *Postcommunism*, p. 3.
 16. Mandelbaum: '[W]here intense competition is the rule, [imitation] is the best formula for survival'; *ibid.*, p. 30. As a comment on the process of transition in Eastern Europe, Mueller writes: 'Imitation and competition are likely to help in all this.' Mueller, 'Democracy, Capitalism, and the End of Transition', p. 138.
 17. Jean-Luc Nancy, 'La Comparution/ The Compearance: From the Existence of "Communism" to the Community of "Existence"', trans. Tracy B. Strong, *Political Theory*, vol. 20, no. 3, August 1992, pp. 371–98, p. 375.
 18. *Ibid.*, p. 376.
 19. '[I]nnocence, therefore, is merely non-action, like the mere being of a stone, not even that of a child'; G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1977, p. 282. If this warning doesn't suffice, one should remember Roberto Rossellini's 1948 film *Germany, Year Zero*.
 20. Jean-Luc Nancy, 'La Comparution', p. 375.
 21. Adorno and Becker, 'Education for Maturity and Responsibility', pp. 30–31; translation amended.
 22. *Ibid.*, p. 32.



Revolution is not a party

DECIPHERING REVOLUTIONS

6 **Lenin and Gandhi: A missed encounter?**

ÉTIENNE BALIBAR

The theme I shall address today has all the trappings of an academic exercise. Still, I would like to attempt to show how it intersects with several major historical, epistemological and ultimately political questions. As a basis for the discussion, I will posit that Lenin and Gandhi are the two greatest figures among revolutionary theorist-practitioners of the first half of the twentieth century, and that their similarities and contrasts constitute a privileged means of approach to the question of knowing what 'being revolutionary' meant precisely, or, if you prefer, what it meant to transform society, to transform the historical 'world', in the last century. This parallel is thus also a privileged means of approach to characterizing the concept of the political that we have inherited, and about which we ask in what senses it has already been and still needs to be transformed. Naturally, such an opening formulation – I was going to say, such an axiom – involves all sorts of presuppositions that are not self-evident. Certain of them will reappear and will be discussed along the way; others will require further justification. Allow me briefly to address several of them.

1

Each of the words I employ here is as applicable to Lenin as to Gandhi, yet a bifurcation immediately opens up. It would nevertheless be too simple to believe that a tableau with two points of entry has been constituted, in which a series of antitheses would exactly correspond: for example, violent and non-violent

revolution; socialist and national or nationalist revolution; a revolution based on a scientific ideology, a theory of social relations, and a revolution based on a religious ideology, or a religiously inspired ethic, and so on. We see right away that these antitheses cannot be deduced from one another; rather, they sketch a sort of typology of modern revolutionary phenomena that helps us analyse their diversity, which is found here concentrated in figures whose power is great enough to have crystallized a debate that still reaches us today. This stems from the considerable consequences of the actions of these individuals, or the historical processes for which they were the protagonists – nothing less than the two great ‘anti-systemic’ movements of the twentieth century (to speak like Wallerstein), of which the split, the intersection, and the more or less complete fusion or on the contrary the divergence, will have been the most important thing about the century that Hobsbawm called ‘the age of extremes’. This stems as well from the extreme ambivalence about the effects of these movements, and the paradoxes with which they were objectively riddled. We have not finished seeking to understand the reasons for them.

And so the Bolshevik Revolution, inspired by an internationalist ideology and based on the conviction that capitalism is a global system whose transformation – whatever its initial modalities – cannot but concern the entire social formation, resulted in ‘socialism in one country’, or more precisely in the attempt to construct a model of organization of the production and normalization of society on a state-wide scale, then that of a bloc of states. This means that in a radical sense Stalin is indeed the truth of Lenin, even if one allows, as I do, that revolutionary practices from one to the other were inverted into their contrary. Once again, history advanced ‘by the bad side’. But it is also true, or at least arguable, that this model, in its reality and the idealized representation that the masses and political leaders of the world made of it, contributed to the establishment of relations of forces and spaces of political action without which capitalist and imperialist logic would have reigned supreme. We can clearly

see the contrast with today. Until its exhaustion, this model kept the tension between social reproduction and transformation alive, including the ceaseless search for variants or alternatives to Leninism within the Marxist tradition, in such a way as to rectify what appeared as its counter-revolutionary degeneration.

For its part, the national revolution inspired and to a certain extent directed by Gandhi no doubt led to one of the greatest processes of decolonization in history, perhaps the greatest, even constituting one of its models (not the only one, obviously). But, as we know, it also produced a result that contradicted the perspectives sketched by its source of inspiration on some essential points.¹ Similarly, there was, according to the famous formula of Moshe Lewin, 'Lenin's last struggle' against the statist drift and policing of the Soviet revolution, just as there was 'Gandhi's last struggle', in which he met his death, against the partition of India and the institution of independence on ethno-religious bases.² The revolutionary 'method' that made a decisive contribution to the creation of the conditions of independence is known in the West by the name of 'non-violence' or 'non-violent resistance'. But it turned out to be incapable of maintaining the content announced in the manifesto *Hind Swaraj* of 1908,³ and nationalist politics toppled into its contrary, a communitarian violence that today, fifty years later, threatens to subvert the states and societies of the Indian subcontinent. But it is also true that, like communism, the Gandhian model of politics – with its innumerable variations of place, conditions, objectives, and discourse as well – has acquired a universalist scope, as a form for the organization of mass movements that aims at the restoration or conquest of fundamental rights and a confrontation between the dominated and the power of the dominant. This does not apply solely to those struggles for national independence and autonomy by minority peoples, but also and everywhere, as we know, for the movements for civil rights and racial equality. Pacifism draws on multiple sources and does not as such constitute the essence of non-violence, but it is obviously part of this heritage.

The confrontation between the figures of Lenin and Gandhi is not new. On the contrary, it has not ceased to spring forth as a kind of test of the truth of relations between politics and contemporary history, since the end of the First World War. Its important role is particularly obvious in India, during and after the struggle for independence, where its detailed explication gave rise to all sorts of variants, including, one might note, interesting attempts to interpret Gandhian strategy in terms of a 'war of position'. Moreover, these attempts support several surprising moments in Gramsci, where he establishes a link with what he believes to have been Lenin's ultimate intention as to the displacement of the centre of gravity of revolutionary struggles. These would form the common point between Gandhism and the major movements of religious reform.⁴ In Europe, and especially in France, as Claude Markovits has rightly recalled in his excellent monograph, the confrontation was not only the doing of Tolstoy and Romain Rolland's disciples; it was also sketched out at the end of the war by communists like Henri Barbusse who sought to make an inventory of all the forces converging in the anti-imperialist struggle.⁵

New life is breathed into this confrontation today from the profusion of social and cultural movements, as much because of the context of globalization as from their theoretical and strategic uncertainty. It results as well from the fact that, compared to the conditions of the twentieth century, the politics of the twenty-first century, in which the idea of revolution circulates in a 'spectral' way, is characterized by the effacement or the complete redistribution of the 'frontiers' that structure the political domain [*l'espace politique*]: politico-cultural frontiers between 'West' and 'East', economic and geopolitical frontiers between a 'central' dominant world and a dominated 'peripheral' world, institutional frontiers between a statist public sphere and a social private sphere, pertinent as much to the localization of powers as to the crystallization of collective consciousness. Above all, what determines this renewed actuality, or at any rate suggests it, is

the fact that politics finds itself submerged in a lasting, if not irreversible, way in a milieu or economy of generalized violence and a circulation of its forms that appears to be structural. This violence bears the traits of a 'preventative counter-revolution', of the repression and if need be perversion of social movements, which poses particularly difficult problems for the very idea of mass politics and, quite simply, democratic politics. In these conditions, it is not surprising to see debates resurface here and there in which Lenin and Gandhi figure as references, signs of strategic alternatives with which the present must be confronted, while 'taking stock' of the faded image of revolutionary politics.⁶

It is also true that these debates sometimes have a tendency to simplify excessively the terms of comparison. They do this, on the one hand, by referring all models of political action to abstract, quasi-metaphysical entities, such as 'violence' and 'non-violence', and, on the other hand, by coming closer and closer – in the grip of the shock produced by certain recent developments of the international conjuncture – to a double series of reductions. They reduce diverse forms of social violence – which are extremely heterogeneous even if they have a tendency to overdetermine and multiply one another – to the unique figure of war; and they reduce war itself to the function of the auto-destructive and catastrophic 'ultimate stage' of capital's domination over the productive forces of society, which would turn them into their contrary and thus mark (once again) the imminent achievement of its historical trajectory.⁷ In my view, these are questions that need to be posed and discussed, but that risk serving as an obstacle to the necessity of compiling more partial inventories.

2

Before focusing on what seems to constitute, retrospectively, the neuralgic point of confrontation between our two models, I would like to recall what justifies bringing them together under the same name of 'revolutionary movements'. It results from two traits that we can well see, after the fact, as inheritances of the

nineteenth century and notably of the 'revolutions' for national independence and social emancipation in the Western world. They were perfected by the dramatic history of the twentieth century, to the point of crystallizing what, from different sides, political theory perceived as the irreducible gap between the concept of the political and its statist formalization, in particular in the mode of a juridical and constitutional definition.

The first trait is constituted by the *place of mass movements*, passing by 'active' and 'passive' phases reciprocally, but maintaining itself for the *longue durée*, intervening on the public stage in an autonomous, majoritarian way, thereby escaping the control and discipline of institutions. This trait is common to Leninism (which on this point takes the inherited tradition of the workers' movement and social democracy to an extreme) and Gandhism (which on this point is innovative in the history of anti-colonial struggles, in India and beyond).⁸ It involves a large variety of formulas associating spontaneity and organization, which depend both on cultural traditions and on the conditions of existence of the masses in the societies under consideration, the ideological motives for mobilization, strategic objectives, and the nature of the established power that it confronts. It in no way excludes 'representation'. On the contrary, in many respects it renders it possible or re-establishes it there where the existing political regime conferred a restrictive or fictive definition upon it. But in all cases it appears irreducible to it, showing in this way that the essence of democracy is not representation, or that representation only constitutes a partial aspect of democracy.

This leads us directly to the second trait common to Leninism and Gandhism, which is their *antinomianism*, taking the term in the traditional etymological sense: *a conflicting relation, at root contradictory, with legality* and thus with the power of the state whose norm of right [*droit*] constitutes both the source of legitimacy and the instrument of control over individuals or social groups. This may concern the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' as the reversal of the 'dictatorship of the bourgeoisie', about

which Lenin could write – recalling the most classical definitions of sovereignty – that its essence resides in the fact of placing, for a social class, its demands for social transformation ‘above the law’. Or it may concern ‘civil disobedience’, the concept of which, coming from Thoreau and, more distantly, the ‘right of resistance’, was systematized by Gandhi in such a way as to cover a whole, graduated set of tactics of struggle aiming to lead the state to the point where it openly enters into contradiction with its constitutional principles, in order to compel their reform. But in both cases legality is transgressed – which does not mean that it is ignored. Rather, it would be brought into the interior of the field of relations of forces it purports to transcend.

Here we can use – and this is not simply a tribute to what’s fashionable – the theoretical grid Negri borrowed from the constitutional tradition coming from the French and American Revolutions: *constituted power is led back to constitutive power*, to the insurrectional element of democracy.⁹ It is true that this occurs at scales and according to modalities and objectives that are profoundly different, that can even appear antithetical. A good portion of current debates on social movements and their capacity for the subversion of civil society comes back precisely to these differences, but this must not stop us from staking out the analogy in principle. This is what implicates a certain ‘concept of the political’ (*Begriff des politischen*), strictly dependent on the confrontation between the workers’ movement and the set of democratic movements, and a kind of authoritarian state that is fundamentally repressive, and from which the expression of social conflicts is radically excluded.¹⁰ Other historians have remarked (as did Gandhi himself, when he touched upon its limits) that the strategy of ‘non-violent civil disobedience’ is made possible by the fact that the mass movement finds itself faced with a state of right (a *rule of law*)¹¹ that is not a simple fiction, in which particularly strong traditions of the guarantee of individual liberties exist. This is the case notably in the Anglo-American constitutional tradition, within certain

limits.¹² The same observation has been made with regard to the effects of the movement of black Americans for civil rights under the leadership of Martin Luther King, at least if one rejects the idea that it was a matter pure and simple of the manipulation of the American federal state against certain local powers.

We therefore have modalities of transgression of legality that are radically different, and about which we cannot determine *a priori* which are the most effective from the point of view of the 'conquest of democracy', to speak like Marx in the *Manifesto*, but which each time seem strictly dependent upon the historical form of the state, or the formalization of the power of 'domination', which they measure. I use this Weberian term 'domination' deliberately, but to elaborate a conception of the forms of domination like the one Max Weber formulates in terms of the 'chance of obtaining obedience', and thus also the 'modalities for the production of disobedience', would take us too far from our discussion here.¹³

3

Before I turn to my two final points, let me first address what I hypothetically called the 'central' or neuralgic problem for each of these two revolutionary models such as we perceive them today.

If one attempts to 'judge' the relation between the Leninist theorization of revolution (which has itself evolved over time), the political strategy put to work by the Bolshevik Party under Lenin's direction (collective direction, but one over which he determined the orientations nearly to the end), and the historical circumstances (which amount to a genuine epochal mutation), one can say very classically that the difficulties concentrate around three moments that are progressively incorporated within one another. The first is tied to the conception of the power of the state as the dictatorship of a class 'autonomized' in relation to society, being a matter of conquering its apparatuses so as to transform them, which implies a conception of the class party as the 'eminent' subject of the revolution, or the privileged

instrument of the movement from social to political struggle. The second is tied to the conjuncture in which one might say Lenin gains a foothold in history by converting a desperate situation into an occasion for rupture with the system of domination: this is the moment of the war of 1914, during which he formulated the slogan of the 'transformation of the imperialist war into a revolutionary civil war', which the Russian military defeat and the uprising of revolting soldiers' councils and their fusion with the social movement of workers and peasants allowed him to put into practice. Finally, the third is tied to the vicissitudes of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' itself, in conditions of civil war and foreign intervention, lasting up to the failed attempt at reforming the Soviet system with the 'New Economic Policy'.

Indeed, each of these moments assigns a central place to the question of organized revolutionary violence, or more exactly to the dialectic of two aspects of what German designates with a single word – *Gewalt* – and which we split into 'power' [*pouvoir*] and 'violence', the institutional and anti-institutional aspects of violence. But in light of today's conditions and needs, it is the second of these moments (the war/revolution relation) that seems to me to command our attention first and foremost. This is what Lenin, and the whole socialist movement contemporary with him, opposed to the exercise of a radically destructive domination, or, if one prefers, to forms of extreme state violence (a point that many historiographies have a tendency to underestimate). From the impossible, it is necessary to remake the possible...

We know that the slogan 'transformation of the imperialist war into a revolutionary civil war' is the privileged target of critiques of totalitarianism, which then find in this matrix of 'terrorism' proper to the Russian Revolution the possibility, at least, of a circulation between revolution and counter-revolution (to be clear: European communism and fascism) of practices for the massive elimination of opposing policies and therefore of the annihilation of democracy (which will end by opening on to the destruction of the revolutionary proletariat itself), whose

reality it is impossible to deny today.¹⁴ But this reading based on the terrorizing power of words ('civil war') does not sufficiently mark out the neuralgic point of intersection for the greatest force, the greatest capacity for liberation, and the greatest danger of perversion, or indeed the greatest mistrust, implicated in Leninism. We must lend as much attention to the first part of this phrase as to the second: Lenin is in fact the only one (and let us note that on this point the Gandhian revolutionary strategy is, admittedly, radically inoperative) to pose the question of the transformation of a situation of extreme violence and the annihilation of the democratic forms of civil society into the means of collective action, of an initiative of the organized masses. In other words, he is the only one not to inscribe violence in the register of inevitability [*fatalité*] and to seek, from the experience itself, the paths of action towards the causes and centres of the decision for extreme violence.

No idea of revolution, or of democratic revolution, can avoid this question and, as in Lenin's case, it is likely that it will also be confronted in the least favourable situations. But there is no doubt here that Lenin finds himself enclosed in a conception of the transformation of the relations of power with no exit, and this in two respects: enclosed *in the national space*, in the besieged fortress, as a result of the failure of the revolutionary movements in the other warring countries, which prevented the internationalization of the 'civil war'; and enclosed *in the ideological space* of a certain Marxism, perhaps of Marxism *tout court*, which cannot but vary to infinity the paradox of the 'non-state state', of seeking out the impossible withering of the state via forms of its reinforcement...¹⁵

If we return now to Gandhi, we can try to perceive the major lines of a contradiction or of a symmetrical *double bind*. We know that what has been translated in Western languages as 'non-violence' covers in reality two distinct notions forged by Gandhi: *satyagraha* for the first, and, for the second, taken and adapted from the ascetic Hindu tradition ('Jainism'), *ahimsa*.

Many of the discussions on the relation between the ethical, or ethico-religious, and the political elements in Gandhism, which different interpreters, including in India, read in diametrically opposed fashion – either as the primacy of a politics ‘adorned’ in religious conscience, or as a spiritual movement coming to perturb the normal course of the political and leading it back on the other side of modern institutional forms – turn around the signification of these two terms, and the possibility of dissociating and reconstructing them otherwise for moving from one cultural context to another, from the East to the West.¹⁶ However, if we do not attend to the set of questions to which they refer, we cannot, it seems, make a complete representation of the ‘dialectic’ for which the Gandhian conception of politics is also the basis [*siège*], nor understand in what sense it introduces a ‘moral’ element into it that arises from conscience but also in large part exceeds its domain.¹⁷

Satyagraha, more or less literally translated as ‘force of truth’, is the term Gandhi substitutes for ‘passive resistance’, from his first experiences of organizing struggles for the civil rights of Indians in South Africa. He then makes this term serve at once as the name of each campaign of civil disobedience and as the generic concept for a form of prolonged struggle, legal and illegal, destined to replace the revolts and terrorist acts with the prolonged mobilization of the mass of the people against colonial domination.

Ahimsa, a traditional term of asceticism, extended by Gandhi from the individual sphere to that of interpersonal relations, is very difficult to ‘translate’ into the language of Western spirituality, even if Gandhi believed he saw affinities with the Christian love of one’s neighbour. It designates above all the concentration of energy that allows one to renounce the hatred for one’s enemy, or the inhibition of counter-violence. If one does not make this ‘religious’ element operative at the heart of the political, one cannot really tie together the contrary movements that form the ‘dialectic’ spoken of above, with its very concretely practical and socially determined aspects, in particular the famous succession

of phases of 'aggressive non-violence'. Here the mass movement frontally opposes domination by illegal practices and phases of 'constructive non-violence', which are essentially phases of democratization internal to the movement, which Gandhi in particular worked to have recognized as an essential aspect of the struggle for independence and a condition of its victory, what Jacques Rancière would call 'the part with no part' – that is, the equality of principle (with nuances that I leave to the side) of pariahs or untouchables, ethnic minorities and women.¹⁸ But neither can one understand the 'revolution in the revolution' constituted by the idea systematically developed by Gandhi – profoundly foreign to the Marxist, and thus Leninist, tradition, despite all that it was able to think concerning hegemony, democratic alliances, the 'contradictions at the heart of the people', and so on – according to which the nature of the means used in the confrontation of social forces reacts on the very identity of these forces and consequently on the ends of the movement, or on the results that it produces in its deeds, whatever its intentions or ideological aims.¹⁹ This opens directly on to Gandhi's famous 'dialogism':²⁰ the idea that all political struggle must involve *a moment of opening to the adversary* that conditions the transformation of his point of view, and on to the practices of auto-limitation of mass action (very difficult, as we know, to put to work, because generally incomprehensible or unacceptable to those who believe the moment of the 'final struggle' has come), illustrated notably by the interruptions of the *satyagraha* when it suddenly reversed from non-violence into communitarian or terrorist violence.

Here I will risk a hypothesis on the aporia internal to the Gandhian model (aporia does not mean absurdity, or inefficacy). It is symmetrical with the Leninist aporia because it also bears on organization, or more profoundly on the nature, the mode of constitution, of the transindividual *collective link* that makes possible the emergence of a political subject, and particularly of a revolutionary subject. This link that one calls 'religious' is more precisely 'charismatic', hung upon the person of the leader as an

object of common love and a subject endowed with a quasi-maternal love that would benefit all the participants of the struggle, and that helps them endure the sacrifices that it involves. This is what one calls roughly saintliness or holiness [*prophétisme*]. We know that in crucial moments when political divergences amount to antagonism (as with Ambedkar on the political representation of the untouchables), where the state refuses to give in, where intra-communitarian conflicts explode into massacre, Gandhi was only able to arrive at the autolimitation of the violence by threatening his own disappearance, the public fast until death, the ultimate but also profoundly ambivalent expression of spiritual force.²¹ This lasts until the ‘final combat’ in which this method fails, or provokes a political murder in return, by a kind of passive violence. The moral, subjective link that makes up the force of the masses and its capacity for resistance then appears profoundly ambivalent, based on an intensely sexualized relation, in which love and death deliver themselves over, on an ‘other scene’, to a struggle that determines, at least in part, all conditions being equal, the objective possibilities for influencing the domination and structural violence of society in a transformative – that is, historic – way.

Are we still in the era of the masses and mass movements, at least in the sense in which the great revolutionary movements of the twentieth century staged them with contradictory results? I cannot answer this question, not only because I don’t have time, but because I don’t know anything about it (I’m not speaking here of wishes, projects or programmes). What is certain, however, is that it seems that the idea of political action must remain closely linked to that of the constitution of a collective actor, in conditions which are themselves not typically the object of programming or a deduction, even if they are by all evidence profoundly determined by class conditions and cultural models. However, these conditions, tied to the urgency of certain conjunctures, in particular to extreme conjunctures – which make the intolerable rise to the scale of whole societies, perhaps to the scale of the

world, and which relaunch the demand for revolutionary transformations – only ever give us a possibility. Some collective actors, or collective practices, in the traditional sense of a philosophy of action that not only transforms a certain material, but ‘forms’ as well the agents themselves, requires forms of organization, and they require affective investments, or processes of subjective identification. In showing – but after the fact – the depth of the contradictions concealed within each of these two apparently simple terms, the histories symbolized by the names Lenin and Gandhi help us not to lose sight of this complexity of the political, in which history projects us without asking our opinion.

Afterword

The current essay was intended as a sequel to my entry on ‘force/violence’ (*Gewalt*) in the great *Historisch-Kritisches Wörterbuch des Marxismus* (in progress), published under the editorship of Wolfgang-Fritz Haug.²² I had ended that very long entry, somewhat cryptically, by suggesting that for the dialectics of structural (capitalist) violence and revolutionary (emancipatory) violence, or counter-violence, to become again an object of theoretical and strategic investigation in the current conjuncture, ‘some debates that have been evaded or closed too rapidly’ ought to be reopened. I gave as a prime example the confrontation of the Leninist politics of the ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’ and the politics of ‘non-violence’ and ‘civil disobedience’ theorized and practised by Gandhi in India, which I labelled ‘the other great form of revolutionary practice in the twentieth century’. And I concluded:

This fictional history never took place. But it could take place in people’s minds in the twenty-first century, as they face the development of a global economy of violence and the concomitant crisis of representation and sovereignty. It has the advantage of drawing our attention, not only to the necessity of civilizing the state, but also to the necessity of civilizing the revolution.’

The essay above on Lenin’s and Gandhi’s ‘missed encounter’ (which, incidentally, was also prompted by the development of a

debate in the post-communist Italian Left around the possibility of keeping a revolutionary perspective in the face of triumphant global neoliberalism, while breaking with the strategies and organizational models of the Kominternian era)²³ represented my personal contribution to this opening.

I certainly see it as a sketch rather than a conclusive argument, if only because my acquaintance with the Gandhian legacy and trajectory is recent, partial and indirect. And although, like many Marxists of my generation and affiliation, I have spent much time reading, reflecting upon and discussing Lenin, this does mean that I claim a 'final' understanding of his historical role. On the other hand, I can testify to the crushing effects that an introduction of 'Gandhian questions' *qua political questions* into the Marxist and Leninist problematic can produce, provided the confrontation does not remain *external* – that is, offering only an abstract choice between opposite ethical values. (The reverse introduction has been rather more frequent, especially in India, for historically understandable reasons.) I can also confirm that, if carried on as more than an academic exercise (in the spirit of the Plutarchian parallels), against the background of the contemporary crisis of capitalist globalization (which is also a crisis of its alternatives), this confrontation is bound to remain relatively inconclusive. All the better, in a sense: this shows that we find ourselves in a genuinely *interrogative* moment; what the philosophers classically call an *aporia*. Not only do I not deny this aspect of my essay, which was acutely pinpointed by some readers,²⁴ but I see it as an advantage, provided the *aporia* does not remain immobile, or is enriched with the introduction of 'third' protagonists. Luxemburg, Mao, Gramsci, Fanon and Mandela are obvious candidates, to remain in the twentieth century. In its dynamic sense, the *aporia* is simply the name of a temporal nexus that does not rule out the 'bifurcations' of the present, because it does not accept that we should simply let 'the dead bury the dead'.

To return to the philosophical-political stakes of the discussion, I would say that – eight years later! – I am even more

interested in submitting three issues that were subjacent in my essay.

The first is concerned with the blurring of the Oriental–Occidental divide, which certainly played a significant role in keeping the Lenin–Gandhi confrontation as a unilateral figure – unless it was replaced by a repetition of an ‘intra-European’ confrontation, featuring the Marxist and the Tolstoyan traditions on both sides, in spite of some interesting intuitions in Gramsci. This is not only a question of geographies and cultures, but also of returning to the classical considerations on the respective importance of ‘state’ and ‘civil society’ in European and Asian societies. It now appears not only that their respective importance might have been assessed in the wrong way, when describing the constraints imposed by bourgeois ‘hegemonic’ structures on popular movements of transformation, but also that they have never constituted a simple dichotomy at any moment of modern history, and even less so now, of course. The ‘world system’ was always already a system of ideological and political communication, and not only a capitalist global economy.

The second issue is concerned with the disentanglement of the categories ‘revolution’ and ‘violence’. Of course, at an abstract level, it might seem sufficient to interpret the idea of revolution in the sense of ‘transformation’ (an idea that is already anathema to many a political theorist today), and then (to avoid the ‘reformist’ or ‘evolutionary’ predicate) to add such qualifications as ‘radical’ or ‘structural’... But this would remain verbal. The problem is not to keep the revolution and drop the violence, because this is practically never a *choice*; it is to understand the retroactive effects of this or that modality of confrontation with violence on the revolution itself. In philosophical terms, it is the question of which violence is *active* and which is not (or is only ‘reactive’). In Spinozistic terms, which violence (on the side of the oppressed, but also dialectically the oppressors) leads to an *increased capacity to act*, and which to a decreasing capacity (hence to passivity or ‘subalternity’)? It is with this question in

mind (not a simple 'pacifism') that I alluded to the twin necessities of 'civilizing the state' and 'civilizing the revolution'.

This leads me to a third issue: that of collective subjectivity. Towards the end of my essay, I strike a somewhat disenchanted note on the indiscernibility of the 'masses' and 'mass movements' in contemporary politics. I will not propose here a facile inversion of this formula, invoking recent events such as the *indignados* of Spain or the regime changes in the Arab world after massive popular mobilizations, as evidence of the 'return of history'. I prefer to reiterate the latent question, which is a question about the *morphology* of the collective subject who can be 'active', in the strong sense, in history, *making a difference* in the structures of power, and *sustaining that difference* over a period sufficient to produce a transformation. Less than ever such questions will be asked outside of the symmetries and dissymmetries of violence and non-violence. But there is little chance that they can become resolved in the 'old' terms of confronting the state's 'monopoly of organized violence' in order to address the more structural violence of the economy. The economy is more violent than ever, and the state is not disarmed, but it is disseminated and 'privatized' in a way that renders the ideological protocols of 'mass politics' highly indeterminate. We would not be surprised if we were increasingly surprised by the emerging morphologies. A serious discussion of the past in *all* its dimensions is a condition for that.

Notes

This is a revised version of a lecture originally written for the Congrès Marx International IV, 'Guerre impériale, guerre sociale', Université de Paris X Nanterre, Plenary Session, Saturday 2 October 2004. It was published in French in Étienne Balibar, *Violence et Civilité*, Éditions Galilée, Paris, 2010. It is translated here by Knox Peden, along with a 2012 Afterword.

1. Several commentators defend this point of view, albeit often from opposed premisses. See Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial*

World: A Derivative Discourse, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1986, ch. 4, 'The Moment of Manoeuvre: Gandhi and the Critique of Civil Society'; and David Hardiman, *Gandhi in His Time and Ours: The Global Legacy of History Ideas*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2003. See also Robert Young, 'India II: Gandhi's Counter-Modernity', *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, Blackwell, Oxford, 2001, pp. 317ff. The debate today has moved to the question of the relation between Gandhi's legacy and

- that of the 'cosmopolitan secularism' of his successors (Nehru), after the critical intervention of Ashis Nandy, which attributes Gandhi's insistence on tolerance to the religious character of his thought and action (see Nicholas Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India*, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 2001, pp. 298–301).
2. Moshe Lewin, *Le dernier combat de Lénine*, Éditions de Minuit, Paris, 1967; translated as *Lenin's Last Struggle*, trans. A.M. Sheridan-Smith, Random House, New York, 1968.
 3. Initially published in Gujarati and English in 1908/9, Gandhi's manifesto for independence, *Indian Home Rule, or Hind Swaraj* has been republished numerous times with variations and the prefaces of collaborators. Many of its themes (including the definition of *satyagraha* as 'civil disobedience' and 'passive resistance') can be found in articles, a selection of which has appeared in French: *La jeune Inde*, with an introduction by Romain Rolland, Librairie Stock, Paris, 1924, and in Gandhi's *Autobiographie, ou mes expériences de vérité*, ed. Pierre Meile, PUF, Paris, 1950.
 4. Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, Edizione critica dell'Istituto Gramsci a cura di Valentino Gerratana, Einaudi, 1975, vol. I, pp. 122–3; vol. II, p. 748; vol. III, p. 1775. Gramsci oscillates between two readings of Gandhi: one which makes non-violence a strategic moment in the scenario of the 'war of positions' (a reformulation enlarged by Gramsci of the Leninist concept of the political), and another which makes it a 'passive revolution' of a religious type, under the influence of Tolstoyism, by allowing in the same stroke for the actualization and retrospective interpretation of the political sense of the major popular movements of religious reform since primitive Christianity in the Roman Empire.
 5. See Claude Markovits, *Gandhi*, Presses de Sciences Po, Paris, 2000, p. 42.
 6. This is what took place in Palestine in the years after Oslo. We can see a reflection of this in the book of interviews by Moustapha Barghouti, *Rester sur la montagne*, Éditions la Fabrique, Paris, 2005. In a wholly different context, the discussion has relevance as well in relation to the strategy invented for Chiapas by the Zapatista movement (see Yvon Le Bot, *Le Rêve Zapatiste*, Éditions du Seuil, Paris, 1997).
 7. Here I simplify – perhaps excessively – the thesis of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri in *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*, Penguin, London, 2004.
 8. Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World, 1914–1991*, Vintage, New York, 1996, pp. 199–222.
 9. In *Le pouvoir constituant* (trans. Étienne Balibar and François Matheron, PUF, Paris, 1997), Negri discusses Lenin at length, but never mentions Gandhi.
 10. The Gramscian thesis opposing the different conditions of the communist revolution in Eastern and Western Europe via the *inverse proportions* of the development of the state and civil society from one side to the other is not fundamentally different. It can even be considered as the reformulation, in Hegelian–Marxist language, of this liberal view. See *Quaderni del carcere*, vol. II, pp. 865ff.
 11. In English in the original (Trans.).
 12. This thesis has been defended, with pertinent nuances, by George Orwell in his article 'Reflections on Gandhi': 'Without a free press and the right of assembly, it is impossible not merely to appeal to outside opinion, but to bring a mass movement into being, or even to make your intentions known to your adversary. Is there a Gandhi in Russia at this moment? And if there is, what is he accomplishing? The Russian masses could only practice civil disobedience if the same idea happened to occur to all of them simultaneously, and even then, to judge by the history of the Ukraine famine, it would make no difference.' *Partisan Review*, January 1949; republished in *The Collected Essays: Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, Penguin, London, 1945–50, vol. 4. But David Hardiman is right to insist on the fact that the 'favourable conditions' necessary to the success of emancipation movements constitute a problem as much for the 'violent' (or armed) movements as for the 'non-violent' movements, which is to say, coming back to the dilemma for the Third World between the 1960s and the 1980s, the 'Guevara' or the 'Martin Luther King' model (*Gandhi in His Time and Ours*, pp. 255ff.). Partha Chatterjee's position in *The Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most*

- of the World (Leonard Hastings Schoff Lectures, Columbia University Press, New York, 2006) is substantially the same.
13. In §§5–7 of ch. 1 (*Soziologische Grundbegriffe*) of the first part of *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (*Economy and Society*), Weber defines the 'legitimacy' (*Geltung*) of a 'social order' as the chance that the constitutive dispositions of this order are effectively followed (and in particular that the laws are obeyed). This entirely pragmatic definition (arising from a sociological theory of action and not a normative theory of right) opens on to the study of the modalities of conflict and its regulation. Today this makes us think of Spinoza on one side, and Foucault on the other.
 14. Such was the fundamental thesis of the protagonists of the German *Historikerstreit* (Historians' Controversy), in particular Ernst Nolte, taken up in France with certain nuances by François Furet (see E. Nolte, *Der europäische Bürgerkrieg 1917–1945: Nationalsozialismus und Bolschewismus, Mit einem Brief von François Furet*, Herbig, Munich, 1997 (1987); François Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion: The Idea of Communism in the Twentieth Century*, trans. Deborah Furet, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1999), but contested by Claude Lefort, *Complications: Communism and the Dilemmas of Democracy*, trans. Julian Bourg, Columbia University Press, New York, 2007.
 15. As we know, this formula is at the heart of the brochure prepared by Lenin between the two revolutions (February and October 1917) and destined to become the breviary of 'Marxism–Leninism': *L'état et la révolution* (Lénin, *Œuvres complètes*, Paris and Moscow, 1962, vol. 25, pp. 429ff, 453ff).
 16. Young, *Postcolonialism*, pp. 317ff.
 17. For contemporary definitions close to the source, see Krishnala Shridharani, *War without Violence: A Study of Gandhi's Method and its Accomplishments* (1939), with a new introduction by Gene Sharp and an epilogue by Charles Walker, Garland Publishing, London, 1972, which insists in particular (p. 283) on the mobilization of the capacity for suffering and the force that it confers against the causes of suffering. Also see Suzanne Lassier, *Gandhi et la non-violence*, Éditions du Seuil, Paris, 1970; Bhiku Parekh, *Gandhi: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1997.
 18. Lassier, *Gandhi et la non-violence*, pp. 100ff. Claude Markovits (*Gandhi*, pp. 199ff) describes the acuity and the limits of the conflict with the leader of the movement of 'untouchables' (dalits), Bhimarao Ramji Ambedkar, and insists on the double failure of Gandhi to get this cause 'recognized' by the Hindu nationalists or his strategy by the dalits themselves.
 19. Joan V. Bondurant, influenced by Hannah Arendt in her interpretation of Gandhi, insists particularly on the difference between Marxism and what it presents as a 'dialectic of the resolution of conflicts' (but not of 'compromise'). See her *Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1971.
 20. This is essentially Hardiman's idea (*Gandhi in His Time*).
 21. This is the problem of the mechanism of identification derived from the figure – traditional in Hinduism – of the 'renouncer' (see Markovits, *Gandhi*, pp. 54–5). But Partha Chatterjee's interpretation (*The Politics of the Governed*, pp. 11–12) is more political: she privileges the figure of the 'mediator', by insisting on his capacity to establish an equivalence between distinct popular movements in a given conjuncture (in terms that are ultimately close to what Ernesto Laclau calls 'populism'; see Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, Verso, London, 2005).
 22. Étienne Balibar, 'Gewalt', in Wolfgang-Fritz Haug, ed., *Historisch-Kritisches Wörterbuch des Marxismus*, Volume 5: *Gegenöffentlichkeit–Hegemonialapparat*, Hamburg, 2001, pp. 1270–1308; in English as 'Reflections on Gewalt', *Historical Materialism*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2009, pp. 99–125. See also the rejoinder by Luca Basso, 'The Ambivalence of Gewalt in Marx and Engels: On Balibar's Interpretation', *Historical Materialism*, vol. 17, no. 2, 2009, pp. 215–36.
 23. See the volume *La politica della non-violenza. Per una nuova identità della sinistra alternativa*, Introduction by Alessandro Curzi and Rina Gagliardi, Edizioni Liberazione, Rome, 2004.
 24. See Nick Hewlett, Badiou, Balibar, Rancière: *Re-thinking Emancipation*, Continuum, London and New York, 2010, especially pp. 136–8.

7 **The will of the people: Notes towards a dialectical voluntarism**

PETER HALLWARD

By 'will of the people' I mean a deliberate, emancipatory and inclusive process of collective self-determination. Like any kind of will, its exercise is voluntary and autonomous, a matter of practical freedom; like any form of collective action, it involves assembly and organization. Recent examples of the sort of popular will that I have in mind include the determination, assembled by South Africa's United Democratic Front, to overthrow an apartheid based on culture and race, or the mobilization of Haiti's Lavalas to confront an apartheid based on privilege and class. Conditioned by the specific strategic constraints that structure a particular situation, such mobilizations test the truth expressed in the old cliché, 'where there's a will there's a way'. Or, to adapt Antonio Machado's less prosaic phrase, taken up as a motto by Paulo Freire, they assume that 'there is no way, we make the way by walking it'.¹

To say that we make the way by walking it is to resist the power of the historical, cultural or socio-economic terrain to determine our way. It is to insist that in an emancipatory political sequence what is 'determinant in the first instance' is the will of the people to prescribe, through the terrain that confronts them, the course of their own history. It is to privilege, over the complexity of the terrain and the forms of knowledge and authority that govern behaviour 'adapted' to it, the purposeful will of the people to take and retain their place as the 'authors and actors of their own drama'.²

To say that we make our way by walking it is not to pretend, however, that we invent the ground we traverse. It is not to suppose that a will creates itself and the conditions of its exercise abruptly or *ex nihilo*. It is not to assume that the 'real movement which abolishes the existing state of things' proceeds through empty or indeterminate space. It is not to disregard the obstacles or opportunities that characterize a particular terrain, or to deny their ability to influence the forging of a way. Instead it is to remember, after Sartre, that obstacles appear as such in the light of a project to climb past them. It is to remember, after Marx, that we make our own history, without choosing the conditions of its making. It is to conceive of terrain and way through a dialectic which, connecting both objective and subjective forms of determination, is oriented by the primacy of the latter.

Affirmation of such relational primacy informs what might be called a 'dialectical voluntarism'. A dialectical voluntarist assumes that collective self-determination – more than an assessment of what seems feasible or appropriate – is the animating principle of political action. Dialectical voluntarists have confidence in the will of the people to the degree that they think each term through the other: 'will' in terms of assembly, deliberation and determination, and 'people' in terms of an exercise of collective volition.

I

The arrival of the will of the people as an actor on the political stage over the course of the eighteenth century was itself a revolutionary development, and it was experienced as such by the people themselves. To assert the rational and collective will of the people as the source of political authority and power was to reject alternative conceptions of politics premised on either the mutual exclusion of society and will (a politics determined by natural, historical or economic necessity) or the primacy of another sort of will (the will of God, of God's representative on earth, or of his semi-secular equivalent: the will of an elite

entitled to govern on account of their accumulated privileges and qualifications).

If the French and Haitian revolutions of the late eighteenth century remain two of the most decisive political events of modern times it's not because they affirmed the liberal freedoms that are so easily (because unevenly) commemorated today. What was and remains revolutionary about France 1789–94 and Haiti 1791–1803 is the direct mobilization of the people to claim these universal rights and freedoms, in direct confrontation with the most powerful vested interests of the day.³ The taking of the Bastille, the march upon Versailles, the invasion of the Tuileries, the September Massacres, the expulsion of the Girondins, the innumerable confrontations with 'enemies of the people' up and down the country: these are the deliberate interventions that defined both the course of the French Revolution and the immense, unending counter-revolution that it provoked. The Haitian revolutionaries went one step further and forced, for the first time, immediate and unconditional application of the principle that inspired the whole of the Radical Enlightenment: affirmation of the natural, inalienable rights of all human beings.⁴ The campaign to re-pacify the people has been running, in different ways in different places, ever since.

The events of 1789–94, and the popular mobilization that enabled them, continue to frame our most basic political choice – between empowerment or disempowerment of the will of the people. In Robespierre's France 'there are only two parties: the people and its enemies', and 'whoever is not for the people is against the people'. Despite the well-known limits of his own populism, Thomas Jefferson found a similar distinction at work in every political configuration: there are 'those who fear and distrust the people, and wish to draw all powers from them into the hands of the higher classes', and there are 'those who identify themselves with the people, have confidence in them' and consider them the 'safest depository of their own rights'.⁵ In spite of all that has changed over the past two hundred years,

the alternative remains much the same: either an insistence on the primacy of popular self-determination or a presumption that the people are too crude, barbaric or childlike to be capable of exercising a rational and deliberate will.

Different versions of this choice have come to the fore every time there is an opportunity to confront the system of domination that structures a specific situation. The will, as Badiou notes, is an essentially 'combative' process.⁶ Haiti, Bolivia, Palestine and Ecuador are some of the places where in recent years the people have managed, in the face of considerable opposition, to formulate and to some extent impose their will to transform the situation that oppresses them. Responses to such imposition have tended to follow the Thermidorian model. The mix of old and new counter-revolutionary strategies for criminalizing, dividing, and then dissolving the will of the people – for restoring the people to their 'normal' condition as a dispersed and passive flock – is likely to define the terrain of emancipatory struggle for the foreseeable future.

II

In a European context, philosophical expression of a confidence in the will of the people dates back to Rousseau, and develops in different directions via Kant, Fichte, Hegel and Marx.⁷ Over the course of this trajectory the category of the people expands from the anachronistic idealization of a small homogeneous community towards an anticipation of humanity as a whole. The more it approaches a global universality the more difficult it becomes, of course, to conceive of the people in terms of a naively immediate or self-actualizing conception of will. Kant's abstract universalization makes too sharp a distinction between determination of the will and its realization; Hegel goes too far in the other direction.

I will assume here that the most fruitful way to begin thinking a dialectical voluntarism that might eventually draw on aspects of both Kant and Hegel is to start with a return to

Rousseau and his Jacobin followers, notably Robespierre and Saint-Just, supplemented by reference to more recent interventions that might be described in roughly neo-Jacobin terms. Rousseau's conception of a general will remains the single most important contribution to the logic at work in a dialectical voluntarism. Unlike Rousseau or Hegel, however, my concern here is not with a people conceived as a socially or ethically integrated unit, one that finds its natural horizon in the nation-state, so much as with the people who participate in the active willing of a general will as such. Such a will is at work in the mobilization of any emancipatory collective force – a national liberation struggle, a movement for social justice, an empowering political or economic association, and so on. 'The people' at issue here are simply those who, in any given situation, formulate, assert and sustain a fully common (and thus fully inclusive and egalitarian) interest, over and above any divisive or exclusive interest.

The gulf that separates Marxist from Jacobin conceptions of political action is obvious enough, and in the first instance a dialectical voluntarism has more to learn from the latter than the former. Nevertheless, what is most fundamental in Marx is not the 'inevitable' or involuntary process whereby capitalism might seem to dig its own grave, but rather the way in which it prepares the ground upon which the determined diggers might appear. 'The emancipation of the working classes', stipulates the well-known opening sentence of the rules Marx drafted for the First International, 'must be conquered by the working classes themselves'.⁸ Even Marx's most non-voluntarist work is best described as an effort to show 'how the will to change capitalism can develop into successful transformative (revolutionary) activity', or as an effort 'not only to make History but to get a grip on it, practically and theoretically'.⁹ (A similar argument, as Adrian Johnston, Tracy McNulty and several others point out, might be made in relation to Freud and Lacan.¹⁰) The concentration of capital and the intensification of exploitation and misery which accompanies it lead not to the automatic collapse of capitalism

but to a growth in the size, frequency and intensity of 'the revolt of the working-class'. It is this class which, as anticipated by the Paris Communards, will carry out the deliberate work of 'expropriating the expropriators'.¹¹ Once victorious, this same class will preside over the establishment of a mode of production marked above all by the predominance of autonomy, mastery and freedom. The newly 'associated producers [will] regulate their interchange with nature rationally and bring it under their common control, instead of being ruled by it as by some blind power.' They will thereby enable affirmation of human creativity and 'energy [as] an end in itself'.¹² Understood as the real movement which abolishes the existing state of things, communism, we might say, forces the conversion of work into will.

The optimism that characterizes such an approach is still emphatic in Gramsci (who seeks 'to put the "will", which in the last analysis equals practical or political activity, at the base of philosophy'¹³) and in the early writings of Lukács (for whom 'decision', 'subjective will' and 'free action' have strategic precedence over the apparent 'facts' of a situation¹⁴). Comparable priorities also orient the political writings of a few more recent philosophers, like Sartre, Beauvoir and Badiou. Obvious differences aside, what these thinkers have in common is an emphasis on the practical primacy of self-determination and self-emancipation. However constrained your situation you are always free, as Sartre liked to say, 'to make something of what is made of you'.¹⁵

Overall, however, it is difficult to think of a canonical notion more roundly condemned, in recent 'Western' philosophy, than the notion of will, to say nothing of that general will so widely condemned as a precursor of tyranny and totalitarian terror. In philosophical circles voluntarism has become little more than a term of abuse, and an impressively versatile one at that: depending on the context, it can evoke idealism, obscurantism, vitalism, infantile leftism, fascism, petty-bourgeois narcissism, neocon aggression, folk-psychological delusion... Of all the faculties or capacities of that human subject who was displaced

from the centre of post-Sartrean concerns, none was more firmly proscribed than its conscious volition. Structuralist and post-structuralist thinkers, by and large, relegated volition and intention to the domain of deluded, imaginary or humanist-ideological miscognition. Rather than explore the ways in which political determination might depend on a collective subject's self-determination, recent philosophy and cultural theory have tended to privilege various forms of either indetermination (the interstitial, the hybrid, the ambivalent, the simulated, the undecidable, the chaotic...) or hyper-determination ('infinite' ethical obligation, divine transcendence, unconscious drive, traumatic repression, machinic automation...). The allegedly obsolete notion of a *pueblo unido* has been displaced by a more differentiated and more deferential plurality of actors – flexible identities, negotiable histories, improvised organizations, dispersed networks, 'vital' multitudes, polyvalent assemblages, and so on.

Even the most cursory overview of recent European philosophy is enough to evoke its general tendency to distrust, suspend or overcome the will – a tendency anticipated, in an extreme form, by Schopenhauer. Consider a few names from a list that could be easily expanded. Nietzsche's whole project presumes that 'there is no such thing as will' in the usual (voluntary, deliberate, purposeful...) sense of the word.¹⁶ Heidegger, over the course of his own lectures on Nietzsche, comes to condemn the will as a force of subjective domination and nihilist closure, before urging his readers 'willingly to renounce willing'.¹⁷ Arendt finds, in the affirmation of a popular political will ('the most dangerous of modern concepts and misconceptions'), the temptation that turns modern revolutionaries into tyrants.¹⁸ For Adorno, rational will is an aspect of that Enlightenment pursuit of mastery and control which has left the earth 'radiant with triumphant calamity'. Althusser devalues the will as an aspect of ideology, in favour of the scientific analysis of historical processes that proceed without a subject. Negri and Virno associate a will of the people with authoritarian state

power. After Nietzsche, Deleuze privileges transformative sequences that require the suspension, shattering or paralysis of voluntary action. After Heidegger, Derrida associates the will with self-presence and self-coincidence, a forever futile effort to appropriate the inappropriable (the unrepresentable, the equivocal, the undecidable, the differential, the deferred, the discordant, the transcendent, the other). After these and others, Agamben summarizes much recent European thinking on political will when he effectively equates it with fascism pure and simple.

Even those thinkers who, against the grain of the times, have insisted on the primacy of self-determination and self-emancipation have tended to do so in ways that devalue political will. Take Foucault, Sartre and Badiou. Much of Foucault's work might be read as an extended analysis, after Canguilhem, of the ways in which people are 'de-voluntarized' by the 'permanent coercions' at work in disciplinary power, coercions designed to establish 'not the general will but automatic docility'.¹⁹ Foucault never compromised on his affirmation of 'voluntary insubordination' in the face of newly stifling forms of government and power, and in crucial lectures from the early 1970s he demonstrated how the development of modern psychiatric and carceral power, in the immediate wake of the French Revolution, was designed first and foremost to 'over-power' and break the will of people who had the folly literally to 'take themselves for a king';²⁰ nevertheless, in his published work Foucault tends to see the will as complicit in forms of self-supervision, self-regulation and self-subjection. Sartre probably did more than any other philosopher of his generation to emphasize the ways in which an emancipatory project or group depends upon the determination of a 'concrete will', but his philosophy offers a problematic basis for any sort of voluntarism. He accepts as 'irreducible' the 'intention' and goals which orient an individual's fundamental project, but makes a sharp distinction between such intention and merely 'voluntary deliberation' or motivation: since for Sartre the latter is always secondary and 'deceptive', the result is to render the primary

intention opaque and beyond ‘interpretation’.²¹ Sartre’s later work subsequently fails to conceive of a collective will in other than exceptionalist and ephemeral terms. Badiou’s powerful revival of a militant theory of the subject is more easily reconciled with a voluntarist agenda (or at least with what Badiou calls a *volonté impure*²²), but suffers from some similar limitations. It’s no accident that, like Agamben and Žižek, when Badiou looks to the Christian tradition for a point of anticipation he turns not to Matthew (with his prescriptions of how to act in the world: spurn the rich, affirm the poor, ‘sell all thou hast’...) but to Paul (with his contempt for the weakness of human will and his valorization of the abrupt and infinite transcendence of grace).

Pending a more robust philosophical defence, contemporary critical theorists tend to dismiss the notion of will as a matter of delusion or deviation. But since it amounts to little more than a perverse appropriation of more fundamental forms of revolutionary determination, there is no reason to accept fascist exaltation of an ‘awakening’ or ‘triumph of the will’ as the last word on the subject. The true innovators in the modern development of a voluntarist philosophy are Rousseau, Kant and Hegel, and the general principles of such a philosophy are most easily recognized in the praxis of people like Robespierre, John Brown, Fanon, Che Guevara... It is to such people that we need to turn in order to remember or reconceive the true meaning of popular political will.

III

On this basis we might enumerate, along broadly neo-Jacobin lines, some of the characteristic features of a will of the people:

- I. The *will* of the people commands, by definition, voluntary and autonomous action. Unlike involuntary or reflex-like responses, if it exists then will initiates action through free, rational deliberation. As Rousseau puts it, the fundamental ‘principle of any action lies in the will of a free being; there is no higher or deeper

source. ... Without will there is no freedom, no self-determination, no “moral causality”.²³ Robespierre soon drew the most basic political implication when he realized that when people will or ‘want to be free they will be’. Sieyès anticipated the point, on the eve of 1789: ‘every man has an inherent right to deliberate and will for himself’, and ‘either one wills freely or one is forced to will, there cannot be any middle position’. Outside voluntary self-legislation ‘there cannot be anything other than the empire of the strong over the weak and its odious consequences.’²⁴

An intentional freedom is not reducible to the mere faculty of free choice or *liberum arbitrium*.²⁵ If we are to speak of the ‘will of the people’ we cannot restrict it (as Machiavelli and his successors do) to the passive expression of approval or consent.²⁶ It is the process of actively willing or choosing that renders a particular course of action preferable to another. ‘Always engaged’, argues Sartre, freedom never ‘pre-exists its choice: we shall never apprehend ourselves except as a choice in the making.’²⁷ Augustine and then Duns Scotus already understood that ‘our will would not be will unless it were in our power.’²⁸ Descartes likewise recognized that ‘voluntary and free are the same thing’, and finds in the ‘indivisible’ and immeasurable freedom of the will our most fundamental resemblance to divinity.²⁹ Kant (followed by Fichte) then radicalizes this voluntarist approach when he defines the activity of willing as ‘causality through reason’ or ‘causality through freedom’.³⁰ Will achieves the practical liberation of reason from the constraints of experience and objective knowledge. As Kant understood more clearly than anyone before him, mere familiarity with what is or has been the case, when it comes to ethics and politics, is ‘the mother of illusion’.³¹ It is the active willing which determines what is possible and what is right, and makes it so. As the French Revolution will confirm, it is as willing or practical beings that ‘people have the quality or power of being the *cause* and ... *author* of their own improvement’.³²

From a voluntarist perspective, the prescription of ends and principles precedes the calculation, according to the established

criteria that serve to evaluate action within a situation, of what is possible, feasible or legitimate. To affirm the primacy of a prescriptive will is to insist that in politics all external (natural, sociological, historical, unconscious, technical...) forms of determination, however significant, are nonetheless secondary, as are all forms of regulation and representation. 'To will', as Badiou puts it, is 'to force a point of impossibility, so as to make it possible.'³³ The guiding strategic maxim here, adopted in situations ranging from Lenin's Russia in 1917 to Aristide's Haiti in 1990, was most succinctly stated by Napoleon: *on s'engage puis on voit*. Those sceptical of political will, by contrast, assume that apparently voluntary commitments mask a more profound ignorance or devaluation of appetite (Hobbes), causality (Spinoza), context (Montesquieu), habit (Hume), tradition (Burke), history (Tocqueville), power (Nietzsche), the unconscious (Freud), convention (Wittgenstein), writing (Derrida), desire (Deleuze), drive (Žižek)...

2. The will of the *people* involves collective action and direct participation. A democratic political will depends on the power and practice of inclusive assembly, the power to sustain a common commitment. As many of his readers have pointed out, what distinguishes Rousseau from other thinkers who (like Plato or Montesquieu) likewise privilege the general over the particular is his insistence that only active *willing* can enable an inclusive association, an association with an actively 'common interest'.³⁴ What 'generalises the public will is not the quantity of voters but the common interest which unites them',³⁵ and what sustains this interest is the common will to identify and accomplish it.

The assertion of a general will, needless to say, is a matter of collective volition at every stage of its development. The inaugural 'association is the most voluntary act in the world', and to remain an active participant of the association 'is to will what is in the common or general interest'. In so far (and only in so far) as they pursue this interest, each person 'puts his person and all

his power in common under the supreme control of the general will'.³⁶ Rousseau's analogy is familiar: 'As nature gives each man an absolute power over his limbs, the social pact gives the body politic an absolute power over all of its members; and it is this same power which, when directed by the general will, bears the name of sovereignty.' Defined in this way, 'the general will is always on the side most favourable to the public interest, that is to say, the most equitable, so that it is necessary merely to be just to be assured of following the general will.'³⁷

As a matter of course, such a will can only remain sovereign in so far as its willing remains general, rather than particular. The general interest will prevail only if the will to pursue it is stronger than the distraction of particular interests; reflection on how best to strengthen it, how best to 'carry the self into the common unity', is Rousseau's most obsessive concern. The legislator who aspires to assist the 'founding of a people ... must, in a word, take away man's own forces in order to give him new ones which are alien to him, and which he cannot use without the help of others'.³⁸

To say that a general will is 'strong' doesn't mean that it stifles dissent or imposes uniformity. It means that in the process of negotiating differences between particular wills, the willing of the general interest eventually finds a way to prevail. There is an inclusive general will in so far as those who initially oppose it correct their mistake and realize that 'if my private opinion had prevailed I would have done something other than what I had willed' – that is, something inconsistent with my ongoing participation in the general will.³⁹ So long as it lasts, participation in a general will, be it that of a national movement, a political organization, a social or economic association, a trade union, and so on, always involves a resolve to abide by its eventual judgement, not as an immediate arbiter of right and wrong but as the process of collectively deliberating and *willing* what is right. Participation in a general will involves acceptance of the risk of finding yourself being, at any given moment, 'wrong with

the people rather than right without them'.⁴⁰ By the same token, it's precisely in so far as it remains actively capable of seeking and willing the collective right that we can agree with Rousseau and Sieyès when they insist that, in the long run, a general will can neither err nor betray. The 'sovereign, by the mere fact that it exists, is always what it ought to be'.⁴¹

The most pressing question, as the Jacobins would discover in 1792–94, is less that of a general will's legitimacy than that of its continued existence. Without 'unity of will', Sieyès understood, a nation cannot exist as an 'acting whole'; 'however a nation may will, it is enough for it to will, [and] for its will to be made known for all positive law to fall silent in its presence, because it is the source and supreme master of all positive law'.⁴² After Robespierre, Saint-Just summarizes the whole Jacobin political project when he rejects 'purely speculative' or 'intellectual' conceptions of justice, as if 'laws were the expression of taste rather than of the general will'. The only legitimate definition of the general will is 'the material will of the people, its simultaneous will; its goal is to consecrate the active and not the passive interest of the greatest number of people'.⁴³

Mobilization of the general will of the people must not be confused, then, with a merely putschist vanguardism. An abrupt appropriation of the instruments of government by a few 'alchemists of revolution' is no substitute for the deployment of popular power.⁴⁴ In spite of obvious strategic differences, Lenin is no more tempted than Luxemburg to substitute a Blanquist conspiracy for 'the people's struggle for power', via mobilization of the 'vast masses of the proletariat'.⁴⁵ It's not a matter of imposing an external will or awareness upon an inert people, but of people working to clarify, concentrate and organize their own will. Fanon makes much the same point, when he equates a national liberation movement with the inclusive and deliberate work of 'the whole of the people'.⁴⁶

Such work serves to distinguish political will from any merely passive opinion or preference, however preponderant. The

actively general will distinguishes itself from the mere 'will of all' (which is 'nothing but a sum of particular wills') on account of its mediation through the collective mobilization of the people.⁴⁷ The people who sustain the 'will of the people' are defined not by a particular social status or place, but by their active identification of and with the emergent general interest. Sovereignty is an attribute of such action. Conceived in these terms as a general *willing*, the power of the people transcends the powers of privilege or government, and entitles the people to overpower the powers that oppose or neglect them. If such powers resist, the Jacobins argue, the only solution is to 'arm the people', in whatever way is required to overcome this resistance.

3. The will of the people is thus a matter of material power and active empowerment, before it is a matter of representation, authority or legitimacy. What divides society is its response to popular self-empowerment. Jefferson goes so far as to privilege insurgency even when it might seem misguided or deluded: 'the people cannot be all, and always, well-informed', he concedes with reference to Shays' Rebellion, but they are entitled if not obliged to 'preserve the spirit of resistance' in the face of all obstacles.⁴⁸ This is as much a Marxist as it is a Jacobin insight. Any social 'transformation can only come about as the product of the – free – action of the proletariat', notes Lukács, and 'only the practical class consciousness of the proletariat possesses this ability to transform things.' Such a praxis-oriented philosophy did not die out after the political setbacks of the 1920s. Sartre took up the same theme in the early 1950s (before Badiou in the 1970s): as far as politics is concerned a 'class is never separable from the concrete will which animates it nor from the ends it pursues. The proletariat forms itself by its day-to-day action. It exists only by action. It *is* action. If it ceases to act, it decomposes.'⁴⁹

Of all the concerns that link Rousseau and Marx, few run as deep as the critique of conventional parliamentary

representation. Since 'a will cannot be represented', so then 'sovereignty, being nothing more than the exercise of the general will, can never be alienated [and] can only be represented by itself; power can indeed be transferred but not will.' The people can (and must) delegate 'agents' to execute their will, but they cannot delegate their willing as such.⁵⁰ Marx follows Rousseau, against Hobbes, when he criticizes modern bourgeois politics as essentially representative – that is, as an expropriation of popular power by the state.⁵¹ The bourgeois 'state enmeshes, controls, regulates, superintends and tutors civil society from its most comprehensive manifestations of life down to its most insignificant stirrings'. Popular emancipation will require the interruption of such a state, and its replacement, through 'the struggle of the producing against the appropriating class', of a political form capable of overseeing 'the economic emancipation of labour'.⁵² In the wake of Marx's critique of the Commune, Lenin's *State and Revolution* takes this argument to its logical conclusion.

Will commands the initiation of action, not representation. An exercise in political will involves taking power, not receiving it, on the assumption that (as a matter of 'reason' or 'natural right') the people are always already entitled to take it. 'The oppressed cannot enter the struggle as objects', Freire notes, 'in order *later* to become human beings'.⁵³ It makes no sense, as John Brown argued during his trial in 1859, to treat the imperatives of justice merely as recommendations that must bide their time: 'I am yet too young', Brown said on the eve of his execution, 'to understand that God is any respecter of persons'.⁵⁴ A similar impatience informs the strategic voluntarism of Che Guevara, who knew that it is pointless to wait 'with folded arms' for objective conditions to mature. Whoever waits for 'power to fall into the people's hands like a ripe fruit' will never stop waiting.⁵⁵

As one of today's more eloquent proponents of a 'living communism' suggests, an inclusive popular politics must start with an unconditional assertion of the 'humanity of every human being'. Our politics, says S'bu Zikode, chairperson of the Durban

shack dwellers' movement Abahlali baseMjondolo, is rooted in the 'places that we have taken' and kept:

We will no longer quietly wait for our humanity to be finally recognized one day. We have already taken our place on the land in the cities and we have held that ground. We have also decided to take our place in all [political] discussions and to take it right now. We take our place humbly, but firmly. We do not allow the state to keep us quiet in the name of a future revolution that does not come. We do not allow the NGOs to keep us quiet in the name of a future socialism that they can't build. We take our place as people who count the same as everyone else.⁵⁶

Those who lack confidence in the people, by contrast, recommend the virtues of patience. Such lack of confidence takes the general form of an insistence on socially mediated time, the time of ongoing 'development'. The people are in too much of a rush; it is too soon for them to prescribe demands of their own.⁵⁷ It is always too early, from this perspective, for equality and participation. Only when they 'grow up' or 'progress' might today's people become worthy of the rights that a prudent society withholds. Between confidence in the people and confidence in historical progress, as Rousseau anticipated, there is a stark choice.

4. Like any form of free or voluntary action, the will of the people is grounded in the practical sufficiency of its exercise. Will is no more a 'substance' or object of knowledge than the *cogito* variously reworked and affirmed by Kant, Fichte and Sartre. A 'fundamental freedom' or 'practical exercise of reason' proves itself through what it does and makes, rather than through what it is, has or knows. Freedom demonstrates and justifies itself through willing and acting, or else not at all.⁵⁸ We *are* free, writes Beauvoir, but freedom '*is only by making itself be*'. We are free in so far as 'we will ourselves free',⁵⁹ and we will ourselves free by crossing the threshold that separates passivity and 'minority' from volition and activity. We will ourselves free across the distance that our freedom puts between itself and a previous unfreedom. We are free as self-freeing.

In order to rouse themselves from the nightmare of history, the people thus need to anticipate the power of their will. The people are condemned, Robespierre accepts, to 'raise the temple of liberty with hands still scarred by the chains of despotism'. A will, individual or collective, cannot begin in full possession of its purpose or power; it precisely wills rather than receives its clarification.⁶⁰ A voluntarist prescription must anticipate effects which enable their cause. Rousseau recognizes this necessity: 'In order for a nascent people to appreciate sound political maxims and follow the fundamental rules of statecraft, the effect would have to become the cause ...; before the creation of the laws, people would have to be what they should become by means of those same laws.'⁶¹ The pressure of events would push Robespierre and Saint-Just to similar conclusions. Marx gave much the same problem its most productive formulation when he framed it in terms of the process that might educate the educators.⁶²

The process of transition from submission to participation, notes Michael Hardt with reference to both Lenin and Jefferson, always involves a 'self-training in the capacities of self-rule. ... People only learn democracy by doing it.' Much of Jacques Rancière's work is organized around a parallel question: given the social differentiation of rulers and ruled, or teachers and taught, how can initially passive, subordinate or 'brutalized' people come to emancipate themselves in an anticipation of equality, an assertion whose verification will retrospectively invalidate any basis for the initial differentiation of functions or intelligences?⁶³ By contrast the already-educated tend to worry that, if left unchecked, popular self-education will lead only to the forever-imminent tyranny of the majority. 'Since the beginning of society', notes Draper, 'there has been no end of theories "proving" that tyranny is inevitable and that freedom-in-democracy is impossible; there is no more convenient ideology for a ruling class and its intellectual flunkies', and 'the only way of proving them false is in the struggle itself'.⁶⁴

5. If it is to persist, a political association must be disciplined and 'indivisible' as a matter of course.⁶⁵ Internal difference and debate within an organized association is one thing; factional divisions or schisms are another. Popular freedom persists as long as the people assert it. 'In order that the social pact may not be an empty formula,' as Rousseau's notorious argument runs, 'it tacitly includes the commitment, which alone can give force to the others, that anyone who refuses to obey the general will shall be compelled to do so by the entire body; this means nothing else than that he will be forced to be free.' Preservation of public freedom, in Robespierre's arresting phrase, requires acknowledgement of the 'despotism of truth'. Collective freedom will endure, in short, only so long as the people can defend themselves against division and deception. 'The general will is always in the right and always tends toward the public utility, but it does not follow that the decisions of the people are always equally correct. ... The people is never corrupted but it is often deceived, and it is only then that it appears to will what is bad.'⁶⁶

'Virtue' is the name that Rousseau and the Jacobins gave to the practices required to defend a general will against deception and division. To practise virtue is to privilege collective over particular interests, and to ensure that society is governed 'solely on the basis of the common interest. ... Each person is virtuous when his private will conforms totally to the general will.' If, then, 'we wish the general will to be accomplished' we need simply to 'make all the private wills agree with it, or in other words ...: make virtue reign.'⁶⁷

The French revolutionaries took Rousseau's advice to heart. If Robespierre prevailed over the course of 1793 it's because he understood most clearly why (as he put it in a private notebook) 'we need a single will, ONE will [*une volonté UNE*]'. If this will is to be republican rather than royalist then 'we need republican Ministers, republican newspapers, republican deputies, a republican constitution.' And since domestic resistance to such

republicanization of the public space 'comes from the bourgeois' so then 'TO DEFEAT THE BOURGEOIS WE MUST RALLY THE PEOPLE.'⁶⁸

Across the distance that links and separates Marx from Robespierre we move from popular insurgency to the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. But what does recourse to such dictatorship imply, other than 'the truism that a cohesive popular will would be overwhelming in a truly democratic state'?⁶⁹ The basic strategic principle was once again anticipated at the limits of Jacobin practice. The 'first and crucial step' towards a more equal distribution of resources and opportunities, Babeuf knew, was 'the achievement of a truly effective democracy through which the people's will could be expressed'. Having witnessed the fate of Robespierre and Saint-Just, however, in the autumn of 1794 Babeuf takes the initial steps down a path that Communist militants would explore for the next century and a half. Since 'the undifferentiated mass of the people' could not be relied upon on its own to sustain the revolution in the face of their enemies, so then the partisans who seek to continue the revolution must first consolidate, through the mediation of popular societies and associations, more disciplined and coherent forms of political organization.⁷⁰

6. The practical exercise of will only proceeds, as a matter of course, in the face of resistance. To will is always to continue to will, in the face of difficulty or constraint. To continue or not to continue – this is the essential choice at stake in any militant ethics.⁷¹ Either you will and do something, or you do not. Even as it discovers the variety of ways of doing or not-doing, these are the alternatives a political will must confront: yes or no, for or against, continue or stop, where 'to stop before the end is to perish'.⁷² A (temporary) survivor of Thermidor, Babeuf knew all too well that 'the organization of real equality will not at first please everyone.' In so far as 'the aim of the Revolution is to destroy inequality and re-establish the common welfare', so then 'the Revolution is not finished' so long as the rich dominate the

poor.⁷³ Then as now, the revolution divides those who seek to terminate it from those who resolve to continue it.

As usual, Sieyès anticipates the essential logic of the antagonism that would inform the Jacobin political sequence: 'a privileged class is harmful ... simply because it exists.'⁷⁴ And, as usual, Robespierre ups the ante: since the rich and the tyrants who protect them are by nature 'the lash of the people', so then the people who dare to overthrow tyranny 'have only one way to escape the vengeance of kings: victory. Vanquish them or perish; these are your only choices.' In the speeches that decided the fate of his own king, Saint-Just relied on the same logic. The king qua king is an 'enemy stranger in our midst', who 'must reign or die'; if the 'king is innocent the people are guilty'.⁷⁵

If for the Jacobins of 1793 'terror' comes to figure as the complement to 'virtue', it is above all as a consequence of their determination to overcome the resistance of kings and the rich. 'One leads the people by reason', as Robespierre explained in February 1794, and

the enemies of the people by terror. ... If the mainspring of popular government in peacetime is virtue, the mainspring of popular government during a revolution is both virtue and terror; virtue, without which terror is baneful; terror, without which virtue is powerless. Terror is nothing more than speedy, severe, and inflexible justice; it is thus an emanation of virtue; it is less a principle in itself than a consequence of the general principle of democracy, applied to the most pressing needs of the *patrie*.⁷⁶

The reasons why the Jacobin terror continues to terrify our political establishment, in a way that the far more bloody repression of the 1871 Commune does not, has nothing to do with the actual amount of violence involved. From the perspective of what is already established, notes Saint-Just, 'that which produces the general good is always terrible'. Terror in the Jacobin (as opposed to Thermidorian) sense is the deployment of whatever force is required to overcome those particular interests that seek to undermine or disempower the collective interest. The Jacobin terror was more defensive than aggressive, more a matter of restraining

than of unleashing popular violence. 'Let us be terrible', Danton said, 'so that the people need not be.'⁷⁷ The need for more limited but no less resilient forms of self-defence has been experienced more recently, in different ways but with similar outcomes, by political militants in the shanty towns of Port-au-Prince and Johannesburg, in the villages of the Altiplano, and in the refugee camps of Gaza and Lebanon.

7. By the same token, the practical exercise of will distinguishes itself from mere wish or fantasy through its capacity to initiate a process of genuine 'realization'.⁷⁸ 'The will always wills to *do* something', notes Arendt, and 'thus holds in contempt sheer thinking, whose whole activity depends on "doing nothing."⁷⁹ As the polysemy of its English usage suggests, a will orients itself in line with the future it pursues. Even Kant could see that in so far as we will its achievement, the 'mere yet practical idea' of a moral world 'really can and should have its influence on the sensible world, in order to make it agree as far as possible with this idea'.⁸⁰ Kant's Jacobin contemporaries anticipated, in their own practice, the implication that post-Kantian philosophy would soon develop in theory. Only suitable republican institutions and educational practices, wrote Saint-Just, can serve to 'guarantee public liberty' and enhance public virtue. 'We have turned into imposing realities', Robespierre proudly declared, 'the laws of eternal justice that were contemptuously called the dreams of humanitarians. Morality was once confined to the books of philosophers; we have put it into the government of nations.'⁸¹

Political will persists, then, to the degree that it perseveres in its material realization or actualization. After Fichte, Hegel complements the voluntarist trajectory initiated by Rousseau and Kant, and opens the door to Marx, when he identifies a free collective will – a will that wills and realizes its own emancipation – as the animating principle of a concrete political association. Thus conceived, the will is nothing other than 'thinking translating itself into existence. ... The activity of the will

consists in cancelling and overcoming [*aufzuheben*] the contradiction between subjectivity and objectivity and in translating its ends from their subjective determination into an objective one.⁸² After Hegel, Marx will expand the material dimension of such concrete determination, without ever abandoning the idea that what is ultimately determinant is not given economic or historical constraints but free human action – the ability of ‘each single individual’ to prescribe their own ends and make their own history.⁸³ Along the same lines, after Lenin and Gramsci, the partisans of ‘dual power’ seek to build, step by step, the grassroots institutions of ‘a social framework responsive to the actual will of the people’.⁸⁴

8. Realization of the will of (the) people is oriented towards the universalization of its consequences. As Beauvoir understood better than Sartre, I can only will my own freedom by willing the freedom of all; the only subject that can sustain the work of unending self-emancipation is *the* people as such, humanity as a whole. Kant, Hegel and Marx take some of the steps required to move from Rousseau’s parochial conception of a people to its universal affirmation, but the outcome was again anticipated by Jacobin practice: ‘the country of a free people is open to all the people on earth’, and the only ‘legitimate sovereign of the earth is the human race. ... The interest, the will of the people, is that of humanity.’⁸⁵

9. The will of the people, however, is not an absolute. The process of ‘thinking translating itself into existence’ cannot be understood in a literally Fichtean or Hegelian sense. To absolutize the will is also to ‘de-voluntarize’ it. Self-determination operates within the constraints of its situation, and the freeing that is a free will is a relative and relational process.⁸⁶ To move in this context from thought to existence is simply to determine, step by step, the consequences of a popular will. Participation in the process which empowers a collective capacity is a practical

and political rather than an ontological process. It prescribes what people may choose to do, not what they are.

10. A final consequence follows from this insistence on the primacy of political will: voluntary servitude, from this perspective, is more damaging than external domination. If the will is 'determinant in the first instance' then the most far-reaching forms of oppression involve the collusion of the oppressed. This is the point anticipated by Étienne de La Boétie, and then radicalized in different ways by DuBois, Fanon and Aristide (and also Foucault, Deleuze and Žižek): in the end it is the people who empower their oppressors, who can harm them 'only to the extent to which they are willing to put up with them'.⁸⁷

It wouldn't be hard to write a history of the twentieth century, of course, in such a way as to illustrate the apparent futility of political will. The failure of German communism in the 1920s, the failure of 'Soviet man' in the 1930s, the failure of anti-colonial liberation movements in the 1950s and 1960s, the failure of Maoism, the failure of 1968, the failure of anti-war and anti-globalization protests – all these seeming failures might seem to demonstrate one and the same basic point: the diffuse, systemic and hence insurmountable nature of contemporary capitalism, and of the forms of state and disciplinary power which accompany it.

Such a distorted history, in my opinion, would amount to little more than a rationalization of the defeats suffered in the last quarter of the twentieth century. In the late 1940s Beauvoir already bemoaned our tendency to 'think that we are not the master of our destiny; we no longer hope to help make history, we are resigned to submitting to it'.⁸⁸ By the late 1970s such complaint, revalorized as celebration, had become the stuff of a growing consensus. This consensus has now been dominant, in both politics and philosophy, for more than thirty disastrous years. It's time to leave it behind.

Notes

- This article is a preliminary overview of an ongoing project. Fragments of the material presented here were first discussed in lectures at the universities of York (October 2006), Nottingham (February 2007), Cornell (April 2007), California at Irvine (November 2007), Kent (March 2008) and London (March 2009). I am grateful, for detailed comments on a rough draft, to Bruno Bosteels, Alberto Toscano, Adrian Johnston, Peter Kapos, Christian Kerslake, Nathan Brown, Tracy McNulty, Frank Ruda, Alex Williams and Richard Pithouse.
1. Antonio Machado, 'Proverbios y Cantares – XXIX', 1912, in *Selected Poems of Antonio Machado*, trans. Betty Jean Craige, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1978.
 2. Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1847), Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1966, p. 109; cf. Peter Hallward, 'What's the Point: First Notes Towards a Philosophy of Determination', in Rachel Moffat and Eugene de Klerk, eds, *Material Worlds*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Cambridge, 2007, pp. 148–58.
 3. See in particular Sophie Wahnich, *La Liberté ou la mort: Essai sur la terreur et le terrorisme*, La Fabrique, Paris, 2003; Wahnich, *La Longue Patience du peuple: 1792, la naissance de la République*, Payot, Paris, 2008; Florence Gauthier, 'The French Revolution: Revolution and the Rights of Man and the Citizen', in Michael Haynes and Jim Wolfreys, eds, *History and Revolution: Refuting Revisionism*, Verso, London, 2007. As for the American revolution, Robespierre was quick to see that it was 'founded on the aristocracy of riches' (Maximilien Robespierre, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Eugène Déprez et al., Société des Études Robespierriennes, Paris, 1910–67, vol. V, p. 17).
 4. Cf. Nick Nesbitt, *Universal Emancipation: The Haitian Revolution and the Radical Enlightenment*, University of Virginia Press, Charlottesville, 2008; Peter Hallward, 'Haitian Inspiration: Notes on the Bicentenary of Independence', *Radical Philosophy* 123, January 2004, pp. 2–7.
 5. Robespierre, *Œuvres*, vol. IX, pp. 487–8; Thomas Jefferson, letter to Henry Lee 1824, in *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Andrew Lipscomb and Albert Bergh, Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association, Washington DC, 1903–04, vol. XVI, p. 73; Jefferson, letter to John Taylor 1816, *ibid.*, vol. XV, p. 23.
 6. 'There can be no pacified conception of the voluntary act' (Badiou, 'La Volonté: Cours d'agrégation', 17 October 2002, notes taken by François Nicolas, www.entretiens.asso.fr/Badiou/02-03.2.htm; I'm grateful to Adrian Johnston for drawing my attention to these lecture notes).
 7. More substantial studies which cover some of this ground include Patrick Riley, *Will and Political Legitimacy*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 1982; Patrick Riley, *The General Will before Rousseau*, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 1986; Andrew Levine, *The General Will*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993; John H. Smith, *Dialectics of the Will*, Wayne State University Press, Detroit MI, 2000.
 8. Karl Marx, 'Rules and Administrative Regulations of the International Workingmen's Association' (1867), in *Collected Works of Marx and Engels*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1975–2005, vol. XX, p. 441; cf. Hal Draper, 'The Two Souls of Socialism', 1966, §1, www.marxists.org/archive/draper/1966/twosouls/index.htm; Draper, 'The Principle of Self-Emancipation in Marx and Engels', 1971, www.marxists.org/archive/draper/1971/xx/emancipation.html.
 9. Ben Fine and Alfredo Saad-Filho, *Marx's Capital*, Pluto, London, pp. 11–12; Jean-Paul Sartre, *Search for a Method*, trans. Hazel Barnes, Vintage, New York, 1968, p. 89.
 10. Adrian Johnston, Tracy McNulty, Alenka Zupančič, Ken Reinhard, letters to the author, 2007–09; Slavoj Žižek, 'To Begin from the Beginning Over and Over Again', paper delivered at 'The Idea of Communism' conference, Birkbeck, University of London, 15 March 2009; cf. Johnston, *Žižek's Ontology*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston IL, 2008, p. 102.
 11. Karl Marx, *Capital* Volume I, trans. David Fernbach, Penguin, London, 1976, p. 929; cf. Marx, *Civil War in France*, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1977, pp. 75–6.
 12. Karl Marx, *Capital* Volume III, ch. 48, www.marxists.org/archive/marx/

- works/1894-c3/ch48.htm; cf. Marx, *Grundrisse*, trans. Martin Nicolaus, Penguin, London, 1973, pp. 611, 705–6.
13. Antonio Gramsci, 'Study of Philosophy', *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1971, p. 345; cf. Gramsci, 'The Modern Prince', in *Selections from Prison Notebooks*, pp. 125–33, 171–2.
14. Georg Lukács, 'What is Orthodox Marxism?', *Political Writings 1919–1929*, ed. Rodney Livingstone, trans. Michael McCollan, NLB, London, 1972, pp. 26–7; cf. Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, trans. Rodney Livingstone, Merlin Press, London, 1971, pp. 23, 145, 181.
15. Sartre, *Search for a Method*, p. 91; Sartre, 'Itinerary of a Thought', *New Left Review* 58, November 1969, p. 45.
16. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, ed. Walter Kaufmann, Vintage, New York, 1968, §488, cf. §666; cf. Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals* I §13, in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, ed. Walter Kaufmann, Modern Library, New York, 2000, p. 481; Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale, Penguin, London, 1968, p. 53.
17. Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, Harper & Row, New York, 1969, p. 59; cf. John Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought*, Fordham University Press, New York, 1986, p. 177; Bret Davis, *Heidegger and the Will: On the Way to Gelassenheit*, Northwestern University Press, Chicago IL, 2007.
18. Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, Penguin, London, 1990, p. 225; cf. pp. 156–7, 291 n24.
19. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. Alan Sheridan, Pantheon Books, New York, 1977, p. 169.
20. Michel Foucault, 'What is Critique?', in *The Politics of Truth*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer and Lysa Hochroth, Semiotext(e), New York, 1997, p. 32; Foucault, Michel Foucault, *Psychiatric Power*, trans. Graham Burchell, Palgrave, New York, 2006, pp. 11, 27–8, 339; cf. Foucault, *Abnormal*, trans. Graham Burchell, Picador, New York, 2003, pp. 120, 157–8; Foucault, 'Truth and Juridical Forms', *Essential Works III: Power*, ed. James D. Faubion, New Press, New York, 2000, p. 25.
21. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (1943), trans. Hazel Barnes, Routledge Classics, London, 2003, pp. 585–6; pp. 472, 479.
22. Alain Badiou, 'La Volonté', 13 March 2003.
23. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile, ou De l'éducation*, Institute for Learning Technologies online edition, <http://projects.ilt.columbia.edu/pedagogies/rousseau/contents2.html>, §1008; Rousseau, *Première version du Contrat social*, in *Political Writings*, ed. Charles Vaughan, Wiley, New York, 1962, I, p. 499.
24. Robespierre, *Œuvres*, vol. IX, p. 310; Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès, *Views of the Executive Means Available to the Representatives of France in 1789* [1789], in Sieyès, *Political Writings*, ed. and trans. Michael Sonenscher, Hackett, Indianapolis, 2003, p. 10.
25. Cf. Hannah Arendt, *Willing*, in *The Life of the Mind*, Harcourt, New York, 1978, vol. II, pp. 6–7.
26. Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discourses*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Nathan Tarcov, Penguin, London, 1983, 2:24, 3:5; cf. 1:16, 1:32; Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. George Bull, Penguin, London, 2004, ch. 9.
27. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 501.
28. Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will*, trans. Thomas Williams, Hackett, Indianapolis, 1993, pp. 76–7; cf. Duns Scotus, 'The Existence of God', in *Philosophical Writings*, trans. Allan Wolter, Hackett, Indianapolis, 1987, 54–6.
29. René Descartes, letter to Père Mesland, 9 February 1645, in *Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, ed. John Cottingham et al., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1984, vol. III, 246; Descartes, *Meditations* IV, *ibid.*, vol. II, 39–40; *Sixth Set of Replies*, *ibid.*, vol. II, 291; *Principles of Philosophy*, *ibid.*, vol. I, §35, §37.
30. Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, in his *Practical Philosophy*, ed. and trans. Mary McGregor, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996 (references to Kant use the standard German pagination), pp. 4:461, 4:446; cf. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, in *Practical Philosophy*, p. 5:15; Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, in *Practical Philosophy*, p. 6:392. In his 1930 lectures on Kant's practical philosophy, Heidegger emphasizes this point – 'to give this priority in everything, to will the ought of pure willing' (Heidegger, *Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. Ted

- Sadler, Continuum, London, 2002, p. 201).
31. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. and trans. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997, pp. A318–9/B375.
 32. Immanuel Kant, 'The Contest of the Faculties', in *Kant's Political Writings*, ed. Hans Reiss, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1970, p. 181; cf. Kant, 'Toward Perpetual Peace', in *Practical Philosophy*, p. 8:351.
 33. Alan Badiou, 'La Volonté', *bilan de septembre* 2003.
 34. Cf. Patrick Riley, 'Rousseau's General Will', in Riley, ed., *Cambridge Companion to Rousseau*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001, pp. 124, 127; Judith Shklar, *Men and Citizens*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1969, p. 184.
 35. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Première Version*, in *Political Writings*, ed. Vaughan, vol. 1, p. 472.
 36. Rousseau, *Social Contract* 4:2, 1:6. In Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, which in many ways might be read as an extended consideration of the process whereby a general will takes shape and dissolves, this moment of association is confirmed by a collective 'pledge' (Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, trans. Alan Sheridan-Smith, Verso, London, 2004, p. 417).
 37. Rousseau, *Social Contract* 2:4; Rousseau, 'Discourse on Political Economy', in *Rousseau's Political Writings*, p. 66.
 38. Rousseau, *Émile*, §24; *Social Contract* 2:7; cf. Riley, *The General Will before Rousseau*, pp. 182–97, 257.
 39. Rousseau, *Social Contract* 4:2; cf. Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès, *Views of the Executive Means Available to the Representatives of France in 1789*, in Sieyès, *Political Writings*, p. 11; Louis-Antoine de Saint-Just, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Anne Kupiec and Miguel Abensour, Gallimard, Paris, 2004, p. 482.
 40. Jean-Bertrand Aristide, cited in J.P. Slavin, 'Haiti: The Elite's Revenge', *NACLA Report on the Americas*, vol. 25, no. 3, December 1991, p. 6.
 41. Rousseau, 'Discourse on Political Economy', p. 66; *Social Contract* 2:3; Rousseau, *Social Contract* 1:7, translation modified.
 42. Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès, *What is the Third Estate?* [1789], in Sieyès, *Political Writings*, pp. 134, 136–8. As Thomas Paine would argue, against Burke, 'the right of a Parliament is only a right in trust, a right by delegation, and that but from a very small part of the Nation, ... but the right of the Nation is an original right ..., and everything must conform to its general will' (Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man*, in Paine, *Political Writings*, ed. Bruce Kuklick, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000, p. 131).
 43. Saint-Just, *Œuvres complètes*, p. 547.
 44. See Marx and Engels, 'Les Conspirateurs, par A. Chenu' (1850), online at www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1850/03/chenu.htm; Marx, 'Meeting of the Central Authority, September 15, 1850', in *Collected Works of Marx and Engels*, vol. X, pp. 625–9; Engels, 'Introduction,' in Marx, *Civil War in France*, p. 14.
 45. Lenin, 'The Conference Summed Up' (7 May 1906), www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1906/may/07.htm; cf. Draper, 'The Myth of Lenin's "Concept of The Party"', 1990, www.marxists.org/archive/draper/1990/myth/myth.htm.
 46. 'Experience proves', adds Fanon, 'that the important thing is not that three hundred people form a plan and decide upon carrying it out, but that the whole people plan and decide even if takes them twice or three times as long' (Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington, Grove Weidenfeld, New York, 1968, pp. 155–6; cf. pp. 198, 204–5; cf. Jane Anna Gordon, 'Of Legitimation and the General Will: Creolizing Rousseau through Frantz Fanon', *The C.L.R. James Journal: A Review of Caribbean Ideas*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2009, pp. 17–53.
 47. Rousseau, *Social Contract* 2:3. Here is the crux of the difference, often noted, between Rousseau's *volonté générale* and Montesquieu's *esprit général*. Occasions for the self-determination of the former arise when the collapse or exhaustion of existing social relations gives the people an opportunity to assert a new and deliberate beginning. The latter, by contrast, emerges through the combination of the 'many things that govern people: climate, religion, the laws, the maxims of the government, examples of past things, mores, and manners' (Charles Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws*, trans. Anne M. Cohler et al., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989, 19:4). Since a general spirit is largely the product of its environment and

- the 'organically' established order of things, Montesquieu's philosophy recommends, in anticipation of Burke and de Maistre, that 'we should accommodate ourselves to this life and not try to force it into patterns of our own devising' (Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws*, 1:2; Norman Hampson, *Will and Circumstance: Montesquieu, Rousseau, and the French Revolution*, Duckworth, London, 1983, p. 9).
48. Jefferson, letter to William Smith, 13 November 1787, in Michael Hardt, ed., Jefferson, *The Declaration of Independence*, Verso, London, 2007, p. 35.
 49. Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, p. 205; Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Communists and Peace*, trans. Martha Fletcher, Braziller, New York, 1968, p. 89.
 50. Rousseau, *Social Contract* 2.1; cf. 3:15.
 51. 'The State does not presuppose the "people" of which it would be the product or the serving delegate; on the contrary it is the state which institutes the represented as political subject, through the permanent dispossession of its capacity to act politically in the first person' (André Tösel, *Études sur Marx, et Engels*, Kimé, Paris, 1996, p. 71). Hence the limitation of Laclau's recent reconceptualization of populism. Since Laclau conceives of the 'construction of a people' not in terms of power, unity and will but in terms of heterogeneity, difference and language, he conceives of any popular 'articulation of a chain of equivalences' first and foremost in terms of representation. For Laclau, arguing against Rousseau, 'the main difficulty with classical theories of political representation is that most of them conceived the will of the "people" as something that was constituted before representation', rather than through it (Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, Verso, London, 2005, pp. 163–4).
 52. Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1978, p. 59; Marx, *The Civil War in France*, p. 74.
 53. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Ramos, Penguin, London, 1996, p. 50.
 54. Cited in Arthur Jordan, 'John Brown's Raid on Harper's Ferry', *International Socialist Review*, vol. 21, no. 1, 1960, www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/isr/vol_21/no01/jordan.htm. 'The general will, to be truly so, must be general in its object as well as in its essence; it must come from all to be applied to all' (Rousseau, *Social Contract* 2:4).
 55. Che Guevara, 'The Marxist–Leninist Party', in *Che: Selected Works of Ernesto Guevara*, ed. Rolando E. Bonachea and Nelson P. Valdes, MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 1969, pp. 104–6.
 56. S'bu Zikode, 'The Burning Issue of Land and Housing', 28 August 2008, www.diakonia.org.za/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=129&Itemid=54.
 57. A version of this assumption informs Simon Critchley's recent work. Since we cannot prescribe our own ends, in order to overcome our 'motivational deficit' we must accept a 'heteronomous' motivation imposed from the other or the outside, an other that is infinitely 'higher', i.e. holier, than us. Responsibility to such a transcendent or infinite demand exceeds all merely autonomous freedom (S. Critchley, *Infinitely Demanding*, Verso, London, 2007, pp. 56–7). The tactical corollary of such piety is a deflating, 'self-undermining' frivolity: the sacred majesty of the other demands of the self 'not Promethean authenticity but laughable inauthenticity' (pp. 124, 82).
 58. How far we are actually or 'objectively' free, Kant insists, 'is a merely speculative question, which we can leave aside so long as we are considering what ought or ought not to be done' (Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A801–4/B829–32; cf. *Groundwork*, pp. 447–50). Rousseau again anticipates the point: 'I will to act, and I act ... The will is known to me by its acts, not by its nature' (*Émile*, §983).
 59. Simone de Beauvoir, *Ethics of Ambiguity*, trans. Bernard Frechtman, Citadel Press, New York, 1976, pp. 24–5, 130–31.
 60. Robespierre, quoted in David Jordan, *The Revolutionary Career of Maximilien Robespierre*, Free Press, New York, 1985, p. 231. Psychoanalysis allows us to recognize, Badiou notes, that the will 'isn't necessarily transparent to itself' (Badiou, 'La Volonté', 13 March 2003).
 61. Rousseau, *Social Contract* 2:7.
 62. Robespierre, *Œuvres*, vol. V, pp. 19–20; Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach* §3, www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/theses/index.htm.
 63. Hardt, 'Introduction', in Jefferson, *The Declaration of Independence*, pp. xix–xx; cf. Hallward, 'Rancière and the

- Subversion of Mastery', *Paragraph*, vol. 28, no. 1, 2005, pp. 26–45.
64. Draper, 'Two Souls', §10.
 65. 'For the same reason that sovereignty is inalienable, it is indivisible, for the will is general, or it is not' (Rousseau, *Social Contract* 2:2; cf. Robespierre, *Œuvres*, vol. VII, p. 268).
 66. Rousseau, *Social Contract* 1:7; Robespierre, *Œuvres*, vol. IX, pp. 83–4; Rousseau, *Social Contract* 2:3.
 67. Rousseau, *Social Contract* 2:1; 'Discourse on Political Economy', pp. 69, 67, translation modified.
 68. Robespierre, notes written in early June 1793, in J.M. Thompson, *Robespierre*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1935, vol. II, pp. 33–4.
 69. Thomas Sowell, 'Karl Marx and the Freedom of the Individual', *Ethics*, vol. 73, no. 2, 1963, p. 119; cf. Draper, *The 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat' from Marx to Lenin*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1987, ch. 1.
 70. R.B. Rose, *Gracchus Babeuf: The First Revolutionary Communist*, Stanford University Press, Stanford CA, 1978, pp. 104, 167–9.
 71. Cf. Beauvoir, *Ethics of Ambiguity*, pp. 27–8; Alain Badiou, *Ethics*, trans. Peter Hallward, Verso, London, 2001, pp. 52, 91.
 72. Robespierre, *Œuvres*, vol. X, p. 572.
 73. Babeuf, *Manifesto of the Equals*, 1796, www.marxists.org/history/france/revolution/conspiracy-equals/1796/manifesto.htm; 'Analysis of the Doctrine of Babeuf', 1796, article 10, www.marxists.org/history/france/revolution/conspiracy-equals/1797/placard.htm; 'Babeuf's Defense', February–May 1797, www.historyguide.org/intellect/defense.html.
 74. Sieyès, *What is the Third Estate?*, in Sieyès, *Political Writings*, p. 157; cf. Fanon, *Wretched*, p. 200.
 75. Robespierre, *Œuvres*, vol. VI, p. 625; vol. V, p. 61; Saint-Just, *Œuvres*, pp. 479, 512.
 76. Robespierre, *Œuvres*, vol. X, pp. 356–7.
 77. Saint-Just, 'Institutions républicaines' (1794), in *Œuvres*, p. 1141; cf. Saint-Just, *Œuvres*, pp. 659–60; Danton, 10 March 1793, cited in Wahnich, *Liberté ou la mort*, p. 62. In his notorious 'Adam and Eve letter', Jefferson defended the initial phase of the Jacobin terror for the same reason. 'The liberty of the whole earth was depending on the issue of the contest [... and] rather than it should have failed, I would have seen half the earth desolated' (Jefferson, letter to William Short, 3 January 1793, in Hardt, ed., Jefferson, *The Declaration of Independence*, pp. 46–7).
 78. Cf. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 505; Gramsci, 'The Modern Prince', in *Selections from Prison Notebooks*, p. 175 n75.
 79. Arendt, *Willing*, p. 37.
 80. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. A808/B836; cf. Frederick Beiser, *German Idealism: The Struggle against Subjectivism 1781–1801*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 2002, pp. 279–80.
 81. Saint-Just, 'Institutions républicaines', in *Œuvres*, pp. 1088–89, 1135; Robespierre, *Œuvres*, vol. X, p. 229.
 82. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Philosophy of Right*, trans. H.B. Nisbet, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991, §4A, §28, translation modified.
 83. Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology* 1A, www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/cho1a.htm#a3; cf. Marx, *Capital* Volume I, p. 739.
 84. Brian A. Dominick, 'An Introduction to Dual Power Strategy', 1998, <http://sandiego.indymedia.org/en/2002/09/2403.shtml>; cf. Alberto Toscano, 'Dual Power Revisited', *Soft Targets*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2007, www.softtargetsjournal.com/v21/alberto_toscano.php.
 85. Saint-Just, *Œuvres*, p. 551; Robespierre, *Œuvres*, vol. IX, p. 469; vol. VII, p. 268.
 86. Badiou, 'La Volonté', 13 March 2003.
 87. Étienne de La Boétie, *The Discourse of Voluntary Servitude*, trans. Harry Kurz, Columbia University Press, New York, 1942, www.constitution.org/la_boetie/serv_vol.htm, translation modified.
 88. Beauvoir, *Ethics of Ambiguity*, p. 139.

8 **The absent philosopher-prince: Thinking political philosophy with Olympe de Gouges**

ARIELLA AZOULAY

Since the publication of Olivier Blanc's biography of Olympe de Gouges and the first collection of her texts, compiled and edited by Benoîte Groult,¹ dozens of articles on various aspects of de Gouges's work have been published. All of them share the assumption that the author of this work was a fascinating figure of the French Revolution who left behind an unprecedented body of feminine political writing and theatrical work. At the same time, paradoxically, many of these studies also share the assumption that de Gouges was a conservative thinker, in terms both of her politics generally and of her feminism.² She is represented as a woman trapped in the accepted political or philosophical positions of her times. Her declared affinity with Rousseau – although she also insisted on the distance between them³ – has been a major factor in the way her work has been read. Indeed, the central categories deployed in discussions of her writings are informed by this affinity, a fact which prevents commentators from viewing de Gouges as an independent political thinker who did not conform to the conceptual system of most of her contemporaries.⁴

My own interest in Olympe de Gouges is not limited to the interpretation of the writings of a past thinker. It is part of an ongoing endeavour to outline a civil political thought, mostly through reading women's texts as an alternative to a modern political thinking that is focused on rule and turns the political into a judgement of taste. But I shall not expound on this here. However, my reading of her writings here aims not only at

reconstructing what Olympe de Gouges wrote, but also what the writings contain potentially, derived from de Gouges's specific position in the discourses of her time – the position of a woman who, like her female peers, struggled with the *Ancien Régime* and did not become a citizen of the new one. To this end, I shall first dwell on the triangle formed by the writings of de Gouges, Arendt and Rousseau. Second, through a discussion of de Gouges's defence of the king, of her play *The Slavery of the Blacks*⁵ and of her novel *The Philosopher-Prince*,⁶ I shall present the main precepts of Olympe de Gouges's political thought.

The governed population and the ruling power

The common struggle of women and men in the *Ancien Régime* nevertheless led, as we know, to the creation of the modern citizen shaped by the denial of political rights to women. In the two years between the storming of the Bastille and the beheading of the king, the men who had become citizens already constituted a part of a new regime that had not so much removed its predecessor as tried to contain it in many ways. The 'Declaration of Human and Civil Rights' clearly shows this: the men who had ventured against the previous regime were soon enough recruited to justify the new one that they had established. The declaration composed by de Gouges, The 'Declaration of the Rights of Women and Female Citizen', like other texts by her and her female contemporaries, bears the traces of a different political discourse. This difference stems first and foremost from a gap between, on the one hand, the whole population of those who were governed and, on the other, the body politic conceived as comprising only citizens – a gap that disappeared without a trace in the language and thinking of most of her contemporaries, but that, as I hope to show, is presented in de Gouges's writings in various forms.⁷

Of course, challenges to traditional or hegemonic modern political thinking are not only to be found in the writings of women. Hannah Arendt, who dealt explicitly with the limits

and limitations of traditional political thought, and hardly read works by female philosophers, drew out a new horizon for political thought from the margins of works by male philosophers. Arendt dwelt on critical discussions of modern political thought in the writings of Locke, Kant, Hegel and Marx. This horizon, as Arendt's female readers know full well, opens to the gaze at moments when philosophy thinks *action* and assumes human plurality – in other words, when the gap between the governed population and the ruling power and what is considered as the body politic is not erased. Arendt did not see this horizon in Rousseau. What she found in his works was the philosophical foundation for Robespierre, and Arendt considered him the one responsible, almost directly, for transforming the 'political' into the 'social' during the French Revolution:

The shift from the republic to the people meant that the enduring unity of the future political body was guaranteed not in the worldly institutions which this people had in common, but in the will of the people themselves. The outstanding quality of this popular will as *volonté générale* was its unanimity, and when Robespierre constantly referred to 'public opinion', he meant by it the unanimity of the general will; he did not think of an opinion upon which many publicly were in agreement.⁸

In *On Revolution* Arendt argued that Robespierre's Reign of Terror was based on transforming the concern for the republic into a concern for the people, and that the origin of this shift is to be found in Rousseau. The Jacobins, she wrote, did not share with the Girondins their concern for forms of governance, institutions and constitutions. Instead, they trusted the natural benevolence of class. Arendt's criticisms of the Jacobins and Robespierre often coincide with those of de Gouges, to be found, for example, in the text that cost her her life, in which she suggested opening to referendum the issue of the proper form of governance.⁹ Nevertheless, in spite of de Gouges's explicit criticism of the place and role Rousseau assigns to women, and in spite of the distance she wished to create between his

works and hers, she would have contested Arendt's criticism of Rousseau had she read it. In one of de Gouges's piercing texts against Robespierre, she criticized him for trying to rule through ignorance, chiding him for his attitude towards philosophers: 'Tell me Maximillian', she wrote in a pamphlet in November 1792, 'why, in the convention, were you so wary of intellectuals? Why did we see you roaring at the electoral assembly against the philosophers to whom we owe the downfall of tyranny, who are the restorers of governments and the true foundation of the world?'¹⁰ De Gouges refers here not only to contemporary philosophers but also to those thinkers whose writings foretold the end of a regime of which citizens are not a part, first and foremost among them Rousseau. However, it was not the presence of the philosopher-king that de Gouges wished to see at the heart of the political arena, but rather his absence, or a present-absence as I hope to show below in relation to de Gouges's only novel, *The Philosopher-King*.

Split in the social contract

At the time of de Gouges's writing, Rousseau's total identification with Robespierre had not yet become as obvious as it was for Arendt. De Gouges harshly criticized the Rousseauist 'general will' and its metamorphosis in the cult, created by Robespierre, of the 'Supreme Being'. Still, she identified the possibility of reading in Rousseau's text an opposition to Robespierre's interpretation and to state terror. True, de Gouges herself did not explicitly produce such a reading of Rousseau's *Social Contract*, although it is necessary in order to reconstruct the philosophical tradition within and against which de Gouges insists on thinking. I shall therefore propose a reading of Rousseau's *Social Contract* as constructed on the basis of two contradictory pacts. The blurring of these two contradictory pacts enabled Robespierre to construct a reign of terror while remaining a Rousseauist. But, I shall argue, their separation is a necessary, although not sufficient, condition for the alternative political thinking that may be

detected in the writings of both Olympe de Gouges and Arendt, and within which I wish to pursue my own work.

Rousseau's *Social Contract* proposes not one but two inter-related pacts. The first pact is that upon which the citizens had agreed, being aware of its clauses while 'signing' it. The other, disguised as part of the first, as only another clause within the same contract, actually breaches and violates its foundation. The two pacts differ in five ways: in what is being exchanged; in the agreement of the citizens; in the end (telos) of the social contract (preservation of the body politic, the life of the parties to the contract or the state or the regime); in the source of sovereignty; and in the principle that determines men's choice ('greater good' or 'lesser evil').

The first pact is outlined in Rousseau's description of the passage from the state of nature to a social order:

This transition from the state of nature to the civil state produces a most remarkable change in man by substituting justice for instinct in his conduct and endowing his actions with the morality they previously lacked. Only then, when the voice of duty succeeds physical impulsion and right succeeds appetite, does man, who until then had looked only to himself, see himself forced to act on other principles, and to consult his reason before listening to his inclinations.¹¹

This passage is in fact the transformation of man into citizen. Rousseau enumerates the great advantages man gains 'in return' while depriving himself of several advantages endowed by nature. According to Rousseau, man's faculties are developed, his ideas enlarged, his sentiments ennobled, his entire soul elevated: 'what man loses by the social contract is his natural freedom and an unlimited right to everything that tempts him and he can reach; what he gains is civil freedom and property in everything he possesses.'¹² This impressive list of advantages should justify men's choice to alienate their freedom. They do it for their own utility, Rousseau writes, and this list is meant to make us understand why. Instead of their natural liberty men gain political and moral freedom, and their simple possessions become legalized.

This choice, so it seems, is a reasonable one, based on a principle of 'greater good'. Man had liberty and property in the state of nature, and now, in the social order, he continues to benefit from both but to a higher degree. What the social pact actually requires the associates to alienate for the sake of the whole community is 'only that portion of his *power*, his *goods*, his *freedom*, which it is important for the community to be able to use'.¹³ The citizens, as Rousseau stresses time and again throughout *The Social Contract*, had agreed upon alienating *only* three of their rights: power, good and freedom, and nothing else.

But this is only part of the story, or just one story. For another story emerges from Rousseau's description of the context in which this choice should be made:

I assume that men having reached the point where the obstacles that interfere with their preservation in the state of nature prevail by their resistance over the forces which each individual can muster to maintain himself in that state. Then that primitive state can no longer subsist, and humankind would perish if it did not change its way of being.¹⁴

At a certain historical moment, men's preservation in the state of nature comes under threat. Contrary to some other philosophers of the social contract, Rousseau does not identify the state of nature with the war of all against all. He speaks instead of a threat hovering above the state of nature due to some *historical* factors that he, however, does not specify. In this story, too, the choice to be made sounds reasonable. But unlike the first story it is based on a different principle – that of 'lesser evil'. Men are required to choose giving up what they naturally have or else be coerced into doing so. Forcibly losing all they had in the state of nature and subjecting themselves to a political regime would be evil – choosing to do so from their own will would be the lesser evil.

But clearly from that moment on, we can no longer speak of agreement and choice. *The Social Contract* is, as Rousseau clearly writes, an effort 'to find a form of association that will defend and protect the person and goods of each associate with the full

common force, and by means of which each, uniting with all, nevertheless obey only himself and remain as free as before ... This is the fundamental problem to which the social contract provides the solution.¹⁵ The outside threat is so ponderous that people have no choice but to unite and submit themselves to a ruling power *as if it were* their own choice, obeying their own voice.

The first story, of the transition from man to citizen, from the state of nature into the social order, is ahistorical. Nothing in the external circumstances is identified as obliging men to take a decision, and their decision is an expression of free choice between two comparable options. The story of the second contract is delineated in more concrete circumstances, such as have forced men to choose between an unknown threat, about which only the sovereign possesses precise information – quite familiar to us, isn't it? – and their subjugation to a political order that, in return, will protect them from this threat. In the second contract, they are prevented from formulating the options of their choice. The sovereign presents them with a catastrophic threat and its proposed removal – a solution cast in the mould of 'the lesser evil'. 'The lesser evil', framed and formulated by the sovereign, is not one option of several, but rather a single solution to a single problem, and if the associates of the contract will not choose it willingly, it will be forced upon them anyway, and at a higher price. These two stories are not independent of each other, or totally separate. Indeed, they are seamed together in such a way that the shift from one to the other is hardly perceptible. But these are not nuances or different versions of the same thing; they are two distinct models. The intrusion of a threat into the social contract, such that only the sovereign can fully know its details, assess its scope and suggest ways to eliminate it, changes the 'rules of the game' of the political association and marks the difference between the two contracts.

What was at stake in the first social contract, its inviolable sanctity, is the preservation of the body politic upon which all

citizens had agreed: 'the body politic or the sovereign, since it owes its being solely to the sanctity of the contract, can never oblige itself, even toward another, to anything that detracts from that original act, such as to alienate any part of itself or to subject itself to another Sovereign.'¹⁶ Sovereignty is the exercise of the general will. The general will can never be alienated and should always remain the collective being that gathers together and decides for itself and not through any representatives: 'Power can be transferred, but not will.'¹⁷ In relation to the first pact, then, it is clear that the sovereign alone – the citizens themselves – judges the importance of the services he is required to render the state.

But all of a sudden, midway through the book, Rousseau introduces a new right, not previously discussed, not included in the agreed contract presented earlier in the book: the 'Right of Life and Death'. Although this is a new right in the context of *The Social Contract*, it is a very old one outside it, well known as the right of the Sovereign in the old sense of the term. With the appearance of this right in the text, the declared end (*telos*) of the social contract – to preserve the body politic – is replaced by the more urgent need to preserve the life of the 'contracting parties'. And it is clearly written, in the old language of the pre-social contract era, that it is not only the sovereign – now called the Prince – who has the right to take life if necessary; it is the citizen's duty to give his life:

whoever wants to preserve his life at the expense of others ought also to give it up for them when necessary. Now the citizen is no longer judge of the danger the law wills him to risk, and when the Prince has said to him, it is expedient to the State that you die, he ought to die; since it is only on this condition that he has lived in security until then, and his life is no longer only a bounty of nature, but a conditional gift of the State.¹⁸

Under a threat to their lives, a threat about which they know nothing, the citizens' preference for the 'lesser evil' makes way for the ethic of the exceptional regarding the lives of others, an ethic conceived and constructed, then, as the citizens' own free will.

Neither Rousseau nor Hobbes before him¹⁹ ever questioned the sovereign's right over the life of the subjects, but this questioning is at the heart of de Gouges's philosophy. One example of this is evident in de Gouges's proposal to institute a female national guard. These women will convince the warring men that the war they are fighting contradicts the essence of their citizenship as a political association with fellows. In the sovereign who authorizes them to take lives – both their own and others'; it is all the same to her – de Gouges sees a tyrant, and regards the warring men as traitors to their fellow citizens: 'It is my intention to write a play so as to ask all the soldiers involved in the war to show fraternity towards the interests of people of other nations, they have nothing to gain from the battles, they are getting killed for the sake of their tyrants!'²⁰

It is tempting – and to a certain extent also correct – to regard de Gouges as a harbinger of the well-established position of critic of the military aspect of democratic republican regimes. But seeing her in this way, discerning a continuity between her criticism and what nowadays is understood as a leftist criticism of a certain form of political power, is to fail to see the revolutionary moment of her time as the moment at which new possibilities of political communities were created, mistakenly identifying it solely with the transition of sovereignty from the monarch to the people. Reducing de Gouges's position to 'opposition to power' takes for granted the subjugation of the political association to a ruling pole as well as the fact that political association is based upon the division of the governed population (within the borders of a state) into citizens and non-citizens (this split is the distinction of passive and active citizens according to Sieyès). Further, it takes for granted – as 'natural' – the recruitment of citizens to abandon or take the lives of others who are governed without being citizens. But this is precisely what reading de Gouges enables us to contest. The creation of the third estate, based on the differentiation between passive and active citizens and the establishment of non-monarchical institutions of governance

(such as the national assembly and the people's army), did not satisfy the revolutionary demands of women such as Olympe de Gouges prior to the Revolution. This is why, I propose, we should see her writings as a criticism not merely of the mode of action of governing institutions but of their actual construction as such, as well as a last attempt to envision differently the nature of political association and its limits. I wish therefore to reconstruct not only de Gouges's unique outlook, but also that other possibility upon which de Gouges insisted until her dying day: to imagine political life not based upon the taking of life.

Sovereignty devoid of its right over lives

I shall try to reconstruct the way in which de Gouges's conceived political association and her vision of sovereignty devoid of its right over lives through a reading of two of her texts. The first is a play written in 1782, seven years before the outbreak of the Revolution, in which the lives of two black slaves – a man and a woman – are at stake. The second, a political pamphlet, concerns the life of King Louis XVI, which is also at stake. The first deals with the authority of the king vested in his deputy, governor of the island, to take the lives of slaves and punish them for murdering a white guard who abused them. The second looks at the authority of the national assembly to take the life of the king. By juxtaposing these two texts and pointing to the matter common to both – contesting the sovereign's right to take life and a reconceptualizing of the source of sovereign power – I hope to transcend the usual narrow framework of commentary on de Gouges to discuss de Gouges's political horizon as a constitutional monarchist and as a limited feminist. I contend that the king's trial was for de Gouges a singular, formative moment at which it was still possible to block the emerging continuity between the new and old regimes and to prevent the taking of life from becoming the basic principle of sovereignty.

In the text 'Olympe de Gouges, Défenseur officieux de Louis Capet',²¹ de Gouges serves as counsel for the king's defence,

through a brilliant analysis of the relation between the old and new power, attempting to tip the scales and ward off any continuity: 'I think that Louis made many mistakes as a king; but when he is bereft of this title of his that has been taken from him, he ceases to be guilty in the eyes of the republic.'²² Here de Gouges distinguishes very clearly between the two bodies of the king – the king's position and the king himself – and seeks, analogously, to distinguish between the mistakes ascribed to him.

After years in which the king's physical body had been out of public sight and certainly away from political space, the Revolution wished to bring him back on stage and expose his truth. In view of the chain of events during the first two years of the Revolution, nothing, it seems, could have satisfied the revolutionary urge to see the king's truth short of his naked body beheaded by the guillotine. De Gouges, however, proposes a different relation between the two bodies of the king, divorced from the category of truth. This is not to take the king's mistakes lightly. She finds him guilty of them: 'He is weak, he has been misled: he has misled us, he himself has made mistakes: here in two words is his trial.' De Gouges even thinks that the king should pay a price for these mistakes. However, the worst mistake ascribed to him – being the king – is not one for which he alone is responsible: 'One of the greatest crimes of Louis Capet, you will agree, was that of being born king at a time when philosophy was quietly preparing the foundations of the republic.'²³ Even had he possessed nobler traits than he did, she reminds her readers, when the gates of enlightenment were opened there was no longer any place for his rule, and his deeds became patently illegal.

These claims, intended to defend the king, are one example of de Gouges's consistent support, from the first to the last of her works, of all those whom the law has rendered illegal: the illegitimate child,²⁴ the woman, the prostitute, the poor, the slave and now the king. She does not seek to show mercy for the king or for any of the above; nor does she seek an exceptional gesture of pardon. She asks of him who has replaced the sovereign – and

whom she insists on seeing as a party to political association – to suspend the law. Not suspension as we know it from Schmitt and Agamben; rather, its opposite. In the case of the king, de Gouges identifies an exceptional case, giving grounds for the suspension of the law, such that the one damaged by this law be treated differently, his status regulated and, if need be, the law re-legislated. For, as de Gouges clearly states, Louis XVI does not bear exclusive responsibility for his most heinous deed. The new law has turned him into an accomplice, ‘His forefathers overfilled the cup of France’s evils; unfortunately for him, the goblet cracked while held in his hands, and all its splinters came raining down upon his head.’²⁵ But it was not only Louis’s forefathers, kings themselves, who had sinned. Our forefathers also, the subjects of the previous kings, had sinned in granting the king their recognition and allowing his rule. For de Gouges, this historical moment is the decisive test of political association and crucial in the formation of the constituent principle of the new regime as either a continuation of the old or as new and totally distinct. Had it chosen not to behead the king, the new regime would have placed at its centre an inclusive pact and the sovereign’s obligation to care for his fellow citizens – including a deposed king – rather than establishing itself, and its relation to its subjects, on the foundation of its authority to take their lives. The new regime failed this test and, like its predecessor, sanctified itself in the blood of those whose happiness it should have tended.

De Gouges in fact proposed to transform the suspension of the law into an opportunity to examine the damages it was wreaking. But the suspension of the law is not the abandonment of those for the sake of whom it was suspended, not an abrogation of their defence by the sovereign. On the contrary, this suspension entrusts these people to the protection of the sovereign. Striving to forestall the new sovereign’s execution of the death sentence against the king, she claims: ‘Beheading a king will not suffice to kill him; he lives on long after his death;

but he truly dies when he survives his fall.²⁶ The first half of the sentence paraphrases the cry 'The king is dead, long live the king!', and points to the relative ease with which the continuity of power is maintained with the people's support. The second half identifies what may be the one and only possibility for the creation of a true break in the continuity of a monarchy: allowing the king to survive under the power that has usurped him while enabling him to acknowledge this power and recognize its legitimacy as an expression of the new civil association. De Gouges thus draws a line between herself and those who were about to vote for the king's beheading. They sought a new start of one kind only – absolute and total – and, to this end, would behead the king with a single neat cut. De Gouges, on the other hand, warned against the transformation of the authority to take life into a constituent principle of the regime, foretelling the reign of terror under which every body that threatened the unity of power and sovereignty was beheaded.

Not to take life

Almost a decade before the king's beheading became an item on the public agenda and the breakout of the Haitian revolution,²⁷ seven years before the storming of the Bastille, de Gouges wrote a play, *The Slavery of the Blacks*. In the background of the plot one reads how, step by step, a governed population negates the sovereign's authority to take life through their resistance to being governed unequally. The play shows, that is, how the sovereign's authority to take life is maintained through this differential rule and how it is abolished once the association of the citizens with the non-citizens undermines the differential rule.

The plot centres on a black slave, Zamor, who has killed his master's white guard in response to the latter's request that Zamor attack Mirza, his beloved (a slave like himself), for having refused the guard's overtures.²⁸ After Zamor commits murder, he and Mirza escape. On their way they rescue a French couple whose boat has sunk. The grateful couple propose to defend

them. For the most part, the play deals with the question of whether they will be executed or spared. Sophie, the French-woman rescued by Zamor, the governor's wife, slaves, men and women, servants and apprentices and even a military officer, all gradually come together to save Zamor and Mirza from a band of armed men who, led by a judge, are hunting them down to execute them for their crime. The governor wavers between the two newly polarized factions created in the play – the men demanding execution and the non-citizens (women, blacks and deserters) who cross the lines and join the demand to free the two slaves. The judge calls on the governor to reach a decision:

They must be put to death at once, more especially as two Europeans have incited a general revolt among the slaves. They depicted your commander as a monster. The slaves listened avidly to these seditious speeches, and all have promised not to execute the orders that they were given.²⁹

The play explicitly calls for the rule of law as a necessary condition for freedom but acknowledges the limits of the law. It justifies disobedience to an obviously illegal law, the legislation of which was made possible under circumstances of differential rule. The play presents Zamor not purely from the perspective of the law that judges his deed, but rather in the context of a reconsideration of the regime that outlawed him in the first place, and abandoned him to injuries that would not be inflicted upon white citizens.³⁰ According to Marie-Pierre Le Hir's interpretation, the actions of the women working to save the two slaves are for de Gouges invalid if they are not sanctioned by the sovereign.³¹ On my reading, quite the opposite is the case. The necessity to take the slaves' lives was unanimously accepted among the governing group of governed. When the governor rules that this is what is to be done, his decision would reconfirm that upon which they – namely one group of governed whose agreement is preserved by excluding another group of governed from the circle of agreement – are agreed. The decision *not to take* their lives, on the other hand, is an effect of the governed's

contestation of the dividing line between them as governed. This contestation annuls any previous agreement between the sovereign and one group of the governed, an agreement that constituted the basis for abandoning the lives of another group. The decision *not to take lives* having been taken, the sovereign and the representatives of the governing–governed group cannot continue to confirm their previous agreement about whose life may be taken. The play ends not only with the governor’s preventing the execution of the slaves, but also with his calling to the residents to come out and celebrate the opening of a new political horizon as the different governed parties associate with each other and refuse to be ruled differentially:

Residents, join me and let us serve these miserable beings with our power. Europe has donned a new face. All peoples tend towards one and the same liberty ... The King of France, called Beloved Louis, is a friend of the people, he no longer desires an unequal division amongst the governed who are all his children. He, conjointly with the nation, no longer wishes for the governed to be executed. The constant tyranny of rulers has committed crimes. And if ever the French Spirit shall prove the keenness of its humaneness and outlook, this will happen when such a noble revolution takes place.³²

Although de Gouges revised this play several times, one year, even three years, after the French Revolution, she always kept the anticipation of a revolution that did not take place: the joining together of a heterogeneous corpus of the governed – women, slaves and men as well – who refuse to recognize any law or authority which abandons their lives or enlists them to take others’ lives.

The difference between the old and the new regimes now gains a new meaning that is not limited to the ruling sphere and its institutions, but to the way they relate to the plane of being governed and the alliance binding those governed. Neither monarchy nor republic as a form of governance suffices to describe a real transition from one regime to another. The agreement among the members of a homogeneous governing group of governed which characterized the *Ancien Régime* – the

agreement on the right of the sovereign and its proxies to take life – continues to characterize the new regime as well, even if the composition of this governing group has radically changed.

Towards the end of the *The Slavery of the Blacks* the governor deliberates, musing over power:

Sovereigns render their people happy: every citizen is free under a good master, and in this country of slavery one must be barbaric in spite of oneself. Hey! How can I help abandoning myself to these reflections, when the voice of humanity cries out from the bottom of my heart: 'Be kind and sensitive to the cries of the wretched'. I know that my opinion must displease you: Europe, however, takes care to justify it and I dare hope that before long there will no longer be any slaves. O Louis!³³

Unlike interpretations of the play that draw an analogy between the governor and the king, the fictional setting and France, I propose a straightforward reading of the governor's words. The governor addresses an absent king whose absence obliges him to refrain from taking Zamor's life, to pardon Zamor for his crime and to change the law creating the hothouse that in fact nurtured this crime. As the judge in the play demands, Zamor's execution would have been an example to the people of what would happen to anyone who ever dared to challenge the ruling power, its laws and its single, unified, irrefutable sovereignty. In this play, as in the political pamphlet 'The Three Ballot Boxes', that landed de Gouges in prison, she attempts to turn the people's uprising against injustices into a lesson for tyrants, 'that to win their revolution will be a lesson to tyrants and not to the people'.³⁴

Rendering the taking of life patently illegal

In her text in defence of the king, de Gouges still believed that it would be possible to prevent the constitution of a unified sovereign power and propose, instead, a different structure. However, in this text she contends that the goal of the new regime, too, is to preserve its sovereignty and its unity. It is the very idea that the people should choose a regime once and for all – be it

republican, federalist, monarchical or democratic – such that this regime constructs itself as irrefutable that motivates de Gouges to address the allegedly republican sovereign as if he were merely one of an unbroken lineage of tyrants: ‘Oh tyrants of the earth, let a tremble engulf you.’³⁵

In her address to the king, written after the flight from his Paris palace, de Gouges comments on the nature of any legitimate relation between the sovereign and the nation: ‘You have learned that the king’s ruling power is worth nothing when it does not *originate* in the supreme power supported by the people’s trust.’³⁶ Beyond the chronology of concrete events that it is possible to link in various differing causal relations to explain the fall of the king, the monarchy disintegrated, according to de Gouges, because the people deserted the king. De Gouges emphasizes not the source of sovereignty but rather the capacity of the people, of the governed community – men and women alike – to lend authority to sovereignty, even when it does not originate in the nation. In other words, in both a monarchy and a republic the legitimacy of the sovereign depends on the people. When the king was deposed, the nation became the origin of sovereignty that, however, is not ensured once and for all, but rather requires incessant renewal of its validity by the nation. Reading the third clause of de Gouges’s ‘Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen’ in this light, it is clear that for her the nation is not an abstract myth or ideal but rather a concrete aggregate of the governed who comprise it – women, men, whites and blacks. Moreover, the sovereignty of those who have declared themselves the nation’s representatives ‘is worthless’ unless the women acknowledge it. Accordingly, as de Gouges wrote in clause 16 of her ‘Declaration’, ‘The constitution is cancelled and null if most of the individuals who comprise the nation have not taken part in its composition.’³⁷ Addressing the king in this text (‘Will there or won’t there be a king?’), she affirms what he needs to regain his rule: the people’s renewed recognition of his rule. She acknowledges the king’s mistakes,

criticizes his deeds and his discretion, but is in no hurry to join those who wish to relinquish his rule altogether. She does not spare the enlightened revolutionaries either, but concludes that their great mistake, equivalent in her view to that of the king, was their exclusion of women and slaves. However, de Gouges affirms the potential embodied in the declaration that served as a foundation for the constitution for restoring the rights of women and slaves. She is therefore not in a rush to be rid of the constitution either, which she describes as ‘a masterpiece’. Calling on the king to return to the people and on the people to return to him, she warns against the ‘unthinkable’ destruction: ‘Should such a glorious creation, a source of light that has become a beacon for the world, be extinguished so as to ignite the torches of clashes? No, honourable sirs, a masterpiece such as this should not ever be allowed to rot away.’³⁸

Altering sovereignty

To classify de Gouges as a monarchist is to miss her argument about the king’s salvation – the salvation of the possibility of women reuniting with men as equal participants in the political act, thus restoring the possibility of circumscribing man’s rule. De Gouges did not seek the preservation of the monarchy but rather the revival of the kingdom. Within the kingdom she wished to preserve the function of the king but only while reorganizing the structure of sovereignty. Unlike most of the revolutionaries of her generation, de Gouges did not propose to transfer sovereignty from the king to the people. Neither did she propose, however, to leave it in the hands of the king as a unified sovereignty.

A sketch of de Gouges’s alternative conception of sovereignty emerges from her novel *The Philosopher-Prince*. The novel tells of a journey through the kingdom of reason, imagination and power. It is an adventurous and brilliant novel, full of humour and philosophical insights comparable to Voltaire’s *Candide*, published four decades earlier. At the end of his journey, the

protagonist Almoladin describes what Louis XVI should have done to prevent the massive bloodshed that occurred during and following the French Revolution. Very little has been written about this novel beyond its being mentioned in passing in works that deal with other of de Gouges's texts.³⁹ The limited discussion of it that there is totally ignores its radical proposal for a newly articulated conception of sovereignty and presents the novel as conservative, especially in relation to the position of women.⁴⁰ (On its back cover even the publisher declares: 'a very conventional ending')

Almoladin, the philosopher-prince of the title, travels through several kingdoms, studying how political relations between human beings and the sovereign are managed in each, and how relations between the sovereign and his subjects are conducted. Having achieved glory through the counsel he offers and the deeds he performs, he returns to his own country, Siam, and rules it for fourteen years. He is renowned as a beloved king and a caring father to his children. After grooming his son to rule after him, Almoladin chooses to leave, to give up his throne and live as a commoner in a village with Palmire, the woman with whom he fell in love some fifteen years earlier and whose love he had been forced to forfeit for marriage to Queen Idamée, to whom he had already been betrothed at the time. Before leaving his kingdom, Almoladin assembles his people and, donning his royal robes, appears before them in his full authority:

My children, for fourteen years now you have been subject to my laws, they have not been a burden to you and your gentleness has proved to me, thousands of times over, that you were satisfied with your sovereign. I have not ruled you at all as a tyrant, I have always loved you gently and ruled you like a father; but if fate had allowed me to choose my avocation, my heart would not have led me to kingship. I will never forget the sacred words uttered by he who brought me into this world, in his very last moments, 'My son', he told me, 'a good king who has done everything for his people has not done enough if he hasn't given them a worthy successor to replace him.'⁴¹

Almoladin relinquishes the throne as soon as he feels able to trust his son to take his place in a worthy manner and to trust the people to resist his son's rule should it exceed appropriate limits. The coronation at which he passes his crown to his son is, then, not as a ceremony continuing the royal dynasty as in the past but, rather, as a ceremony constituting a new covenant in the framework of which a new type of sovereign rule is founded. Almoladin imposes two conditions that shake up the structure of sovereignty: 'Here is the condition that I have decided to impose upon my son', he says, turning to the people before he goes on, 'I do not know how many years I will be absent from my kingdom. I request and demand that without my express instructions not a single death sentence against a single offender will be carried out.'⁴²

On the face of it, one might say, Almoladin remains the sovereign, he who is authorized to declare an exception, while his son, the acting sovereign, is his father's subject, thus leaving the structure of sovereignty as before. However, two significant details undermine this interpretation and reveal the complexity of the proposed structure. First, Almoladin is physically abandoning the territory and retreat from the political space in which he will, in fact, remain only as an absent authority – one that could be termed nature, philosopher-king, invisible entity, godhead or even international tribunal – which the people or the (acting) sovereign can mobilize should one of them dare to disobey Almoladin's commandment not to take anyone's life. This commandment was intended to protect both the people from the king and the king from the people. The second condition that Almoladin imposes concerns the structure of the relations between the three poles of the invisible absent authority, the sovereign and the people. During the coronation a covenant is established between them, articulating a new structure of sovereignty. In the course of the ceremony Almoladin warns his son in the presence of the people, forbidding him the localized use of the death sentence and thus founding his regime on a

mechanism of exception – the meaning of which is the taking of lives. From here on, Almoladin will become an invisible entity, an absent presence, through the condition he leaves behind for the continuation of power. As he is about to disappear, his consent will be forever unobtainable. In so doing, he accordingly renders the taking of life patently illegal.

Toward a civil disagreement

Even if de Gouges's writings do not propose a well-ordered or methodical discussion of 'the political', 'the regime', 'contract', 'citizenship' or 'sovereignty', they are a rich and inspiring source for political thought because of the traces they bear of a possibility that was present at the precise moment that the modern conception of citizenship was invented and distorted, shaped as goods distributed by the sovereign state. Its distribution – always tight-fisted and not always for all alike – has maimed the citizens who received it.

This maiming, which I have elsewhere called *civil invalidity*, turned these citizens – us – into accomplices in a crime committed against others governed along with us without any acts having been perpetrated. This civil invalidity is not an individual characteristic, the outcome of a damaged personality or moral shortcoming in the persons suffering from it. A civil invalidity is created when the differences in the ways various groups are being governed become a structural feature of the regime. It is an effect of being governed differentially – governed with and alongside others, but in an entirely different way. A civil invalidity is an effect of the regime and its governmental apparatuses; the governed participate – consciously and unconsciously, willingly or unwillingly – in the formation of those apparatuses and are formed by them.

It is this invalidity that enables one group of the governed to be recruited in order to persecute another group; to subject them to a catastrophe, and then see this catastrophe as 'these people's catastrophe', 'a catastrophe from their point of view', a

natural part of the order of things.⁴³ 'In its various forms', Eyal Weizman wrote, 'the principle of the "lesser evil" functions as a pragmatic compromise, an exception to common ethics and political contracts, and in fact acts as the primary justification for the very notion of this exception.'⁴⁴ Through the reading of Rousseau's *Social Contract* in this article I have tried to show how the consent of the citizens to the ethics of the exception, to the lesser evil in relation to the taking of life, is not external to the social contract but part of its structural logic and an essential part of the existence of citizens in democratic regimes. I have also tried, through the reading of Olympe de Gouges, to mark initial 'dotted lines' along the seams that hold these two pacts together, locating the threads that need to be pulled in order to unravel the fusion that had become an evident given of modern democratic regimes. A new regime – led by a revolution that has not yet taken place – would have to be based upon a structural *disagreement* among its governed about the taking or abandoning of life. This disagreement is the consequence of the political ontology of their being a heterogeneous plurality, or an 'inoperative community' to use Jean-Luc Nancy's words.

BASED ON A TRANSLATION BY TAL HARAN

Notes

1. Olivier Blanc, *Olympe de Gouges*, Editions Syros, Paris, 1981; Benoîte Groult, 'Olympe de Gouges: la première féministe moderne', in *Olympe de Gouges: Œuvres*, Mille et une femmes, Mercure de France, 1986. To date, very little (only one play and the 'Declaration') of de Gouges's writings has been translated into English.
2. It has become *bon ton* to depict de Gouges as politically conservative and limited in her thinking on slavery or women. See, for example, Doris Kadish, 'Translating in Context', in Doris Y. Kadish and Françoise Massardier-Kenney, *Translating Slavery: Gender and Race in French Women's Writing 1783–1823*, Kent State University Press, Kent OH, 1994; Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean 1787–1804*, Chapel Hill Press, Chapel Hill NC, 2004. This is accompanied by an attitude that holds her talent as a playwright to be limited beyond the pioneering subject matter with which she dealt. Thus, for instance, Eléni Varikas writes, in her introduction to a play republished in 1989, 'if de Gouges' play is worthy of our attention today, this is not so much due to its dramatic value but mainly because of the ideas it expresses.' Eléni Varikas. 'Introduction à L'esclavage des noirs', in *L'esclavage des*

noirs, Côté-femmes, Paris, 1989, p. 17. See also Annette Rosa, *Citoyennes: les femmes et la révolution française*, Messidor, Paris, 1988. Gabriella Verdier, who offers an analysis of several of de Gouges's plays, criticizes this view and demonstrates de Gouges's innovativeness in the realm of theatre: Gabriella Verdier, 'From Reform to Revolution: The Social Theater of Olympe de Gouges', in Catherine Montfort-Howard, ed., *Literate Women and the French Revolution of 1789*, Summa Publications, Birmingham AL, 1994.

3. See, for example, the sarcasm with which she refers to him – 'the citizen from Geneva' – in a text calling on women to rescue France. De Gouges quotes a passage from Rousseau's 21st letter to Julie without disclosing its author, distancing herself from its position. See Olympe de Gouges, *Écrits Politiques 1792–1793*, Côté-femmes, Paris, 1993, p. 121.
4. The most radical stand of this type is taken by Erica Harth, who in the final chapter of her book thanks Daniel Morris for making her think about the limitations of de Gouges's thought: 'De Gouges' feminism is defined by the boundaries of the philosophical discourse.' Erica Harth, *Cartesian Women: Versions and Subversions of Rational Discourse in the Old Regime*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca NY, 1992, p. 233. Harth analyses the play *The Slavery of the Blacks* and the novel *The Philosopher-Prince*, presenting both as mainly conservative due to de Gouges's understanding of nature, 'which contradicts Rousseau's depiction of initial equality in the second speech and illustrates his view of women' (ibid.). In this article I propose a reading of these plays that is diametrically opposed to Harth's. Contra Harth, see also Verdier, 'From Reform to Revolution', in which Verdier proposes the category of solidarity among women as a central motif for the interpretation of de Gouges's plays.

In an article on de Gouges's rhetoric, Janie Vanpée stresses the importance of the immediate historical context in understanding her work and shows the degree to which de Gouges assumes that context to be shared by her audience. Vanpée proposes a fascinating analysis for understanding the rhetorical means

employed by de Gouges to address her audience. Janie Vanpée, 'Taking the Podium: Olympe de Gouges's Revolutionary Discourse', in *Women Writers in Pre-revolutionary France: Strategies of Emancipation*, Garland Publishing, New York, 1997). However, this analysis is based on an assumption that I will seek to refute: that, in the absence of this context, the texts emerge as weak. This assumption pertains to a particular stratum of the text while disregarding the importance that de Gouges ascribed to the fact that her texts were meant to be read.

- In Vanpée's work the criticisms of de Gouges's capacities for writing and philosophizing are contradicted by the spellbinding manner in which she represents the author's unique treatment of issues such as that of illegitimate children. See Janie Vanpée, 'Revendication de la légitimité: les performances révolutionnaires d'Olympe de Gouges', in *Sexualité, mariage et famille au XVIII^e siècle*, Les presses de l'université Laval, Quebec, 1988; Janie Vanpée, 'Performing Justice: The Trials of Olympe de Gouges', *Theater Journal* 51, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore MD 1999.
5. Olympe de Gouges, *L'esclavage des noirs* (1792), Côté-femmes, Paris, 2006; Olympe de Gouges, *L'esclavage des Nègres – version inédite du 28 décembre 1789*, ed. S. Chalaye and J. Razgonnikoff, L'Harmattan, Paris, 2006.
 6. Olympe de Gouges, *Le Prince philosophe: conte oriental*, 2 vols, Indigo and Côté-femmes, Paris, 1995.
 7. For more on this gap, see ch. 1 of Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography*, Zone Books, New York, 2008.
 8. Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, Penguin Books, London, 1990, p. 76.
 9. Olympe de Gouges, 'The Three Ballot Boxes', in *Écrits Politiques 1792–1793*.
 10. De Gouges, *Écrits Politiques 1792–1793*, p. 166.
 11. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings*, trans. Victor Gourevitch, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997, Book I, ch. 8, p. 53. All quotations from Rousseau refer to this edition.
 12. Ibid., Book I, ch. 8, pp. 53–4.
 13. Ibid., Book II, ch. 4, p. 61, emphasis added.
 14. Ibid., Book I, ch. 6, p. 50.

15. Ibid., Book I, ch. 6, pp. 49–50.
16. Ibid., Book I, ch. 7, p. 52.
17. Ibid., Book II, ch. 1, p. 57.
18. Ibid., Book II, ch. 5, p. 64.
19. See Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996, ch. 21.
20. De Gouges, *Écrits Politiques 1792–1793*.
21. Ibid., pp. 191–4.
22. Ibid., p. 192.
23. Ibid.
24. See Vanpée, 'Revendication de la légitimité', for an analysis of the issue of illegitimate children in de Gouges's work.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid., p. 194.
27. In a later Introduction added to the play one year after the revolution in Haiti (and almost a decade after the play was written), de Gouges attempted to ward off the colonists' attacks against her play and its contribution to the uprising. In reply to these attacks she addressed the slaves and challenged the violence of their revolution just as vehemently as she had condemned Robespierre and the violence exercised by him and his accomplices in the French Revolution, comparing the deeds of the slaves to those of the despots that preceded them. De Gouges acknowledged the blacks' rights to equality but rejected violence as a means to obtain them.
28. Prior to a restaging of this play at the Théâtre Volland, Emmanuel Genvrin compiled a comparison of its three versions. All three indicate de Gouges's strong position on the abolition of slavery. I would like to thank Genvrin for allowing me to read his remarks, only part of which were published. See his introduction to the play in Emmanuel Genvrin, *Études: suivi de l'esclavage des nègres d'après Olympe de Gouges*, Éditions Théâtre Volland, Saint-Denis, 1988.
29. Olympe de Gouges, *The Slavery of the Blacks*, Act II, Scene 6, trans. Maryann DeJulio as *Black Slavery, or The Happy Shipwreck*, in Kadish and Massardier-Kenney, *Translating Slavery*.
30. This stance anticipates Lyotard's moral thinking by about two hundred years. (Jean François Lyotard, *Just Gaming*, trans. Wlad Godzich, Theory and History of Literature vol. 20, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1985.)
31. In her article on the play, Marie-Pierre La Hir points out the pioneering stand of de Gouges, who as early as 1783 called for a redefinition of the role of the king. Le Hir states, however, that 'there is no question at all that *The Slavery of the Blacks* sets out to defend the monarchy'. In order to explain the conflict between de Gouges's innovativeness and her monarchist stand, she introduces the terms of a patriot king and popular sovereignty. Marie-Pierre Le Hir, 'Feminism, Theater, Race: *L'esclavage des Noirs*', in Kadish and Massardier-Kenney, *Translating Slavery*, p. 74.
32. Ibid.
33. De Gouges, *The Slavery of the Blacks*, p. 106.
34. De Gouges, 'The Three Ballot Boxes', p. 246.
35. Ibid.
36. De Gouges, *Écrits Politiques 1792–1793*, p. 189.
37. Ibid., p. 209.
38. Ibid., p. 191.
39. With the exception of Harth, *Cartesian Women*.
40. De Gouges, *Le Prince Philosophe*. Some critics even charge the text with support for the oppression of women. According to Leopold Lecour, 'She paid women no compliments here either, [mentioning only] their "shameful" features, their shortcomings, laziness, their vanity, etc.' (*Trois femmes de la révolution*, Librairie Plon, Paris, 1900, p. 82).
41. De Gouges, *Le Prince Philosophe*, p. 70.
42. Ibid.
43. I showed this in relation to the catastrophe inflicted upon the Palestinian residents of Palestine/Eretz-Israel during the years 1947–50, which became their 'disaster' – the *Nakba*. See Ariella Azoulay, *Constituent Violence 1947–1950* (in Hebrew), Resling, Tel Aviv, 2009.
44. From an unpublished paper Weizman presented at a workshop on 'The Lesser Evil' at Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson NY, 2007. A later version is available at <http://roundtable.kein.org/node/802>.

NATIONAL HISTORIOGRAPHIES

9 English philosophy in the fifties

JONATHAN RÉE

If you asked me when was the best time for philosophy in England in the twentieth century – for professional, academic philosophy, that is – I would answer: the fifties, without a doubt. And: the fifties, alas. Under the leadership of Gilbert Ryle and J.L. Austin, the career philosophers of that period had their fair share of bigotry and evasiveness of course; but they also faced up honestly and resourcefully to some large and abidingly important theoretical issues. Their headquarters were at that bastion of snobbery and reaction, Oxford University; and by today's standards they were shameless about their social selectness. They also helped philosophy on its sad journey towards being an exclusively universitarian activity. But still, many of them tried to write seriously and unpatronizingly for a larger public, and some of them did it with outstanding success. And collectively they resisted the temptations of sophisticated specialization – the twin troughs of a blinkered technical expertise which apes the manners of a normal scientific research discipline, and total immersion in the exposition and advocacy of one or two favourite authors. Like any other bunch of academics, they could of course be trivial, arrogant, clubbish and boring; but under the banner of a 'revolution in philosophy' they generated a collective verve and excitement in English professional philosophy which has no rival in the twentieth century.

In what follows I have tried to piece together their story from a range of social, institutional, political, personal, cultural and

theoretical materials. If I give less space than I might to the most celebrated writings from the period, this is not in order to foreground social context at the expense of theoretical content. Nor is it that I think these books are not worth reading. On the contrary: but it is because the philosophical achievements of those years – as of any other, I expect – have as much to do with sets of social habits, possibly unconscious, as with the contents of the books which were destined to become classics. For these reasons, I have not engaged with the high-altitude synoptic critiques – notably those of Marcuse and Anderson – to which Oxford philosophy has been subjected, either.¹

The story I tell is meant to be an argument as well as a factual record. It shows that although the proponents of the Oxford philosophical revolution prided themselves on their clarity, they never managed to be clear about what their revolution amounted to. In itself this is not remarkable, perhaps; but what is strange is that they were not at all bothered by what was, one might have thought, quite an important failure. This nonchalance corresponded, I believe, to their public-school style – regressive, insiderish and disconcertingly frivolous. But the deliquescent social and theoretical manner, repellant as some of us may find it, was also able, it seems, to open out onto some of the alpine intellectual vistas of philosophy at its best.

From a commercial point of view, English philosophy in the 1950s was dominated by a single book. In terms of market success, coverage in the highbrow weeklies and fame in the popular media, it completely outclassed the competition. The entire print run of 5,000 copies was sold on publication day, 28 May 1956, and a further 15,000 in the next six months.² According to the *Daily Mail*, it was enjoying ‘the most rapturous reception of any book since the war’.³ The *Evening News* headlined ‘A Major Writer and He’s 24’. A new philosophical genius was about to burst on the scene, and he was going to ‘shock the arid little academic philosophers a good deal’.⁴ The brilliant young man

was sponsored by what may be called the inheritors of the spirit of the Bloomsbury Group. They were not academics, but – in imagination at least – independent intellectuals, living off inherited wealth supplemented by their writing. If they had had a university education, they would boast of having learnt nothing from it. They regarded professional erudition, and the trades of teaching or research, as tedious and degrading. Above all, they prided themselves on their commanding view of international cultural modernity. In fact they could be suspected of an inverted cultural nationalism. The idea of ‘English culture’ struck them as pretty laughable. As far as they were concerned, culture meant Europe, and especially France. And French culture, as they understood it, was essentially philosophical, comprising large reflections on the human condition, of a kind that English brains seemed incapable of producing.

During the fifties, the Bloomsburys controlled most of the machinery of literary reception in England, especially in the Sunday papers, the literary periodicals (such as *Encounter*, edited by Stephen Spender, and *The London Magazine*, edited by John Lehmann) and the *Times Literary Supplement*.⁵ And they all did what they could to support their philosophical prodigy. His book was dedicated to Angus Wilson, and Edith Sitwell wrote a pre-publication puff for the ‘astonishing’ work of this ‘truly great writer’. Cyril Connolly’s review spoke of ‘one of the most remarkable first books I have read for a long time’. Elizabeth Bowen was ‘thunderstruck’ by the intelligence of the ‘brilliant’ new philosopher; V.S. Pritchett found the book ‘dashing, learned and exact’; and Kenneth Walker said it was ‘masterly’ and ‘the most remarkable book on which the reviewer has ever had to pass judgement’.⁶ Philip Toynbee called it ‘an exhaustive and luminously intelligent study ... of a kind which is too rare in England’. It was the sort of book, in fact, that you might expect in France; ‘and what makes the book truly astounding is that its alarmingly well-read author is only twenty-four years old’.⁷

It certainly was an unusual work. It gathered diverse

information about a range of real and fictional characters – T.E. Lawrence, Nijinsky, van Gogh, Nietzsche, William Blake, Bernard Shaw, and the protagonists of novels by Barbusse, Sartre, Camus, Hemingway, Joyce, Hesse and Dostoevsky – in order to construct a composite portrait of the hero of our time: the exile, the stranger, the marginal. He was the sort of man (and it was definitely a man's world) who insisted on posing deep questions, concerning 'the problem of *pattern or purpose* in life'. He was 'the man who sees "too deep and too much"'. He could not 'consider his own existence or anyone else's *necessary*'. He was a loner, 'cut off from other people by an intelligence that ruthlessly destroys their values'. In the past, sad to say, such heroes had always been misunderstood, not only by others but also by themselves. Today, however, it was at last possible to penetrate the mysteries of their 'religious existentialism' and 'anti-humanism': 'if they had known themselves as well as we know them, their lives need not have been tragic'. From now on these spiritual exiles were destined to occupy the centre of the cultural stage.⁸

The author's title for the book was *The Pain Threshold*, but the publisher changed it to *The Outsider*, thus making an adroit allusion to Camus, whose novel of 1942, *L'Étranger*, had been published in English under the same title in 1946. It was an astute choice, because *outsider* could serve as a name for the type of hero depicted in the book, and a byword for all those who wanted to identify with him.

The author of *The Outsider* was Colin Wilson. Wilson was born into a poor family in Leicester in 1931, and had little formal education. From the age of sixteen, he earned his living as an unskilled factory worker. He kept a journal, and spent all his spare time reading. He married young, and dreamed of becoming a writer some day. Eventually he left home and set out for London. At night, he slept on Hampstead Heath; by day, he laboured on his masterpiece in the British Museum.

Wilson's success was part of a larger media confection: the phenomenon of the 'angry young man'. The phrase, which was

launched six weeks after *The Outsider* was published, began as part of the publicity for a flagging production of John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* at the Royal Court Theatre.⁹ It was picked up in the *Evening Standard*, and then used by Osborne in a *Panorama* programme on BBC TV on 9 July. It caught on as a label not only for Wilson and Osborne, but also for the novelists Kingsley Amis (*Lucky Jim*, 1954) and John Wain (*Hurry on Down*, 1953). The idea of the angry young man was that he was born to a working-class family in the early 1930s; he was too young to fight in the war, but he benefited not only from the welfare state instituted by the Labour government of 1945, but also from the system of grammar schools set up under the Butler Education Act of 1944, offering free academic education to children who passed an intelligence test at the age of eleven. After grammar school, the angry young man would probably have gone to university, but only a modern provincial 'redbrick', not Oxford or Cambridge.¹⁰

It could be no surprise to the Bloomsburys that such young men were lazy, loutish and vindictive. As early as 1948, T.S. Eliot had warned against the 'headlong rush to educate everybody' which was 'destroying our ancient edifices to make ready the ground upon which the barbarian nomads of the future will encamp in their mechanised caravans'.¹¹ It was the same sort of people who would demonstrate against intervention at Suez in 1956, and who formed the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in 1958.

The angry young man seemed to have history on his side, however. An American commentator envied him, saying that 'the young British writer has the inestimable advantage of representing a new class'. The angry young man was on his way to taking over 'the culture of his country' from the old Bloomsburys with their 'blend of homosexual sensibility, upper class aloofness, liberal politics, and avant-garde literary devices'. He was in the process of liberating literature 'from the tyranny of a taste based on a world of wealth and leisure which has become quite unreal'.¹²

The view from Bloomsbury connected the angry young men with the moral fervour which F.R. Leavis had brought to the

teaching of English Literature at Cambridge University since the 1930s, and which had created many of the most influential teachers in the grammar schools: provincial, sincere, laborious and earnest.¹³ These schoolmasters knew nothing of 'the continent' – its languages, its opera houses, its galleries, its wines, its cooking, its literatures, its landscapes. They drank warm beer in squalid pubs, and doted on dull English humanistic realism as if international modernism had never happened. The angry young man, in short, represented everything in the England of the fifties which offended and alarmed the Bloomsburys.

Of course this imaginary sociology was quite inaccurate: the Bloomsburys were not necessarily rich, and many of the angry young men were prosperous enough, and had been educated at public school and Oxbridge. It nevertheless helped define some of the issues at stake in the cultural controversies of the time. Participants could advertise their allegiances by how they chose to eat, drink, dress, speak or make love. The angry young man would have a loud, rough voice with a regional accent, and he would prefer the Anglo-Saxon to the Latinate parts of the English language. The Bloomsburys, however, would speak in a soft, precise, upper-class and melodious voice and they would bestrew their discourse with bits of French. They saw themselves as representatives of *belles lettres*; they were the *ancien régime*, the 'candelabra and wine *rentier* writers ... wincing with distaste ... quivering with *nuance*'.¹⁴ Evelyn Waugh discovered belatedly that the Butler Education Act had 'nothing at all to do with the training of male indoor-servants' but provided instead for 'the free distribution of university degrees to the deserving poor'. The 'grim young people' of '*l'école de Butler*', as he called it, were 'coming off the assembly lines in their hundreds every year', and, worst of all, they were now 'finding employment as critics, even as poets and novelists'.¹⁵

In reality, a fascination with 'French culture' was common amongst the younger English writers of the fifties. Plenty of recent French novels and plays were available in translation; but

the real focus of interest was philosophy, which meant the work of the 'existentialists' – especially Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Camus and Merleau-Ponty. From the mid-forties onwards, there were plenty of breathless primers about what Jean Wahl called 'The Philosophical School of Paris',¹⁶ and numerous translations of serious works of philosophy too.¹⁷ Several English novelists nourished themselves on French philosophy – authors like Angus Wilson, William Golding, Anthony Burgess, Muriel Spark and Iris Murdoch. It gave them the idea of writing about fundamental and extreme human situations; and as Iris Murdoch put it in 1950, in an article on the future of the novel, it meant the death of *la littérature morale* and the dawn of the era of *la littérature métaphysique*.¹⁸

The Outsider pleased the Bloomsburys because it seemed to prove that, despite their fears, the *école de Butler* included true intellectuals who not only loved French philosophical culture, but also, from the bottom of their hearts, scorned English provincialism and English academic life. Colin Wilson was a native outsider, a home-grown existentialist. As Philip Toynbee put it, Wilson had beaten the French at their own game, and made 'a real contribution to our understanding of our present predicament'.¹⁹ The *Evening News* alluded to fears that 'the Welfare State has killed the thoughtful man by too much kindness, seducing him from the wholehearted pursuit of his meditative ideal'. The success of *The Outsider* reassured them: 'Thank God', they said, 'it hasn't'.²⁰

The first book on this philosophical phenomenon of the fifties appeared in 1958. In *The Angry Decade*, Kenneth Allsop lamented the British inability to produce intellectual heroes *à la française*. Britain was 'infuriatingly innocent of the facts of life', and 'insulated' from vital currents of European thought. 'By the time they reach Britain, ideas and intellectual argument are muddled', Allsop said: 'they get too shaken up in transit'. But Colin Wilson had broken this pattern: he had recognized the greatness of 'men like Sartre, Camus and Beckett, and the German Hermann

Hesse'. He had 'tasted the deep vein of continental nihilism and pessimism'.²¹ England's own existentialist concurred: in laying his plans for 'the new anti-humanist epoch' he had to acknowledge that 'England is totally unaware of these problems; intellectually, we have always been the most backward country in the world.'²²

The success of *The Outsider* did not last long. Perhaps his Bloomsbury sponsors began to fear that Wilson's devotion to natural 'leaders' and his belief that the mentally ill ought to be shot were not after all the *dernier cri* of continental philosophical depth.²³ Certainly they suspected that the vulgar appeal of Wilson – the 'literary Elvis Presley' and 'philosophical Tommy Steele', with his band of 'Spotty Nietzscheans' – was getting out of hand.²⁴

Still, the splash made by *The Outsider* proved that Colin Wilson was right about one thing: English philosophical culture must have been in a sorry state if such a clumsy book could be acclaimed by the literary and intellectual elite. But it is not necessary to invoke a national incapacity for philosophy in order to explain this weakness. The political organizations which had fostered a mass interest in 'proletarian philosophy' between the wars were moribund.²⁵ The British (later Royal) Institute of Philosophy, founded by Lord Balfour in 1925 to encourage the popularization of an idealist political philosophy of 'citizenship', had only a thousand members, but they were mostly elderly and the Institute's activities had an air of pastness, which even the great efforts of its president, Viscount Samuel – elder statesman and philosophical amateur, author of *Belief and Action: An Everyday Philosophy* (1937) – were unable to remove.

After the Second World War, English philosophy had retreated more and more from civil society, to isolate itself in educational institutions.²⁷ It had almost no presence in secondary schools, however, and even in the universities – which were peripheral in any case, educating less than 4 per cent of the age group at

the beginning of the fifties – it was only a minor discipline. In 1952, the two professional philosophical organizations – the Mind Association and the Aristotelian Society – had worldwide memberships of 477 and 287 respectively.²⁸

The philosophical faculty of Oxford University, however, was an exception. With about fifty teachers in 1950, distributed over some thirty colleges, it was by far the largest in England. (It was, indeed, the largest in the British Isles; but Scotland, Ireland and, to some extent, Wales maintained their own traditions, and my story is only about England.) In 1950 there were about three hundred students who did some philosophy in their BA exams at Oxford – one candidate in six. None of them was a specialist however: the only way Oxford undergraduates could study philosophy was by following either the ‘Greats’ course, where they would spend at least half their time on Greek and Latin classics, or the PPE or PPP course (‘Modern Greats’), where they spent at least half their time on Politics, Economics, Psychology or Physiology. And there were only about a dozen ‘graduate students’ – mostly Americans – studying philosophy for the new-fangled qualifications of BPhil and DPhil.²⁹

Cambridge University had two professors of philosophy in 1950, and four lecturers. Each year about six students took the philosophy exam (Moral Sciences Part II). In addition there were, as at Oxford, about ten graduate students. Six hundred students sat University of London exams in arts subjects in 1951, but only eight specialized in philosophy. (On the other hand, hundreds of student-teachers took the unprestigious exam in Philosophy of Education.) Finally, the nine independent ‘civic’ universities in England (Birmingham, Bristol, Durham, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Nottingham, Reading and Sheffield) each had a professor of philosophy, and two or three lecturers.³⁰

There were therefore about two hundred philosophy teachers in England at the beginning of the fifties (a quarter of them in Oxford), and perhaps five hundred students a year sitting exams with a significant amount of philosophy in them. Postgraduate

studies in philosophy hardly existed: there was no need for them as universities were prepared to recruit new philosophy teachers on the basis of personal acquaintance and a BA degree. As A.J. Ayer was to say: 'Having a doctorate was nothing to be proud of, rather the reverse, since it implied that you had not been good enough to obtain an appointment' – 'at the worst to a post in some red-brick university' – 'on the strength of of your first degree.'³¹ Furthermore, the idea of philosophy as a field of academic research, rather than undergraduate teaching, did not command much support. If philosophy teachers wished to pursue original inquiries, it would be as proud amateurs, in their long vacations or in retirement, rather than as part of their paid work.

So it is not surprising that the guardians of English high culture in the fifties were poorly informed about philosophy: it was not well represented even in the English universities. Still, Colin Wilson and the 'School of Paris' were not the only philosophers who received recognition in London literary circles; there were also a few English professional philosophers with a public reputation.

There was A.J. Ayer, for example, who was a professor in London at the time. He was born in 1910, and educated at Eton and Oxford. But his intellectual and political style made his peers suspicious of him. Like Colin Wilson, he wrote his first and most successful book when he was twenty-four. *Language, Truth and Logic* was published in a cheap format by the left-wing trade publisher Gollancz in 1936, and has sold better than any other English work of professional philosophy of the twentieth century. Its doctrines were those of the 'Logical Positivists' of the Vienna Circle. Ayer's opening sentence stated bluntly that 'the traditional disputes of philosophers are, for the most part, as unwarranted as they are unfruitful.' His conclusion was that 'philosophy must develop into the logic of science' and that 'it is necessary for a philosopher to become a scientist ... if he is to make any substantial contribution towards the growth of human knowledge.'³²

Language, Truth and Logic was not liked by the philosophical establishment. H.J. Paton, Professor of Moral Philosophy at Oxford, said that Ayer had 'exposed the nature of Logical Positivism, if I may so express myself, in all its naked horror.' Even twenty years later, he would 'hesitate to repeat in print some of the things said about him at the time'.³³ However, Ayer managed to make a vivid if imprecise impression on a wider public, who applauded him as a champion of modern scientific knowledge, and even of the oppressed social classes, against the deadly complacency of English cultural conservatism.

Visibly and audibly, Ayer modelled himself on Bertrand Russell. Russell was born in 1872 into the highest ranks of the English aristocracy, educated at home and then at Cambridge University. He wrote (with A.N. Whitehead) the most imposing English work of philosophy of the century, the *Principia Mathematica* (1910–13). His politics were openly radical: he was an atheist, a feminist, a partisan in theory and practice of free divorce, and creator of an experimental primary school. His pacifism cost him his job at Cambridge in 1916, and six months in prison in 1918. After that, he did not teach again in England except for lecturing in Cambridge from 1944 to 1949. But he wrote prolifically, always acting the part of the courageous nonconformist who has the nerve to ask a simple question, and so puncture the pompous bluster which shields social injustice from political criticism. The priggish cheek of the introduction to his *Sceptical Essays* – which 'captivated' the young Ayer in 1928 – is typical of him:

I wish to propose for the reader's favourable consideration a doctrine which may, I fear, appear wildly paradoxical and subversive. The doctrine in question is this: that it is undesirable to believe a proposition when there is no ground whatever for supposing it true.³⁴

In 1950 Russell was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, and throughout the following decade he continued to publicize his radicalism, especially following his participation in the

creation of CND, which, in 1961, led to his second period in an English prison, this time at the age of 89.

Ayer shared some of Russell's radicalism. He was divorced, and enjoyed a reputation as a womanizer. He advertised his atheism, his hatred of the Tories, and his active support for Labour in politics and Spurs in football. He played an important part in the Campaign for Homosexual Law Reform, though always keen to emphasize that he had no personal stake in the issue. He was naturally asked for his verdict on *The Outsider*, and was one of the few to be critical of it.³⁵ To the Bloomsburys, therefore, Ayer could be seen, with Leavis, as a pioneer of the conscientious gracelessness of the new generation.³⁶ In an anonymous leading article in 1957, the *Times Literary Supplement* tried to reassure its readers that Ayer's hostility to metaphysics was part of the now withered 'Leftist tendencies' of the thirties. In those days, thanks to *Language, Truth and Logic*, 'logical positivism successfully carried the red flag into the citadel of Oxford philosophy'. (And readers would recall that 'Marx himself had been a great enemy of metaphysics' too.) But now, at last, 'philosophy has been purged of any taint of Leftism'.³⁷

Ayer's public fame as an iconoclastic radical clear-thinker from the same mould as Russell was secured by his participation in the BBC's *Brains Trust* programme, broadcast weekly first on radio, then on television. In this capacity he also replaced the third English public professional philosopher of the post-war period, C.E.M. Joad. Joad was born in 1891, son of a provincial university teacher. He was educated at Oxford, entered the civil service, but left in 1930 to become head of the Philosophy Department at Birkbeck College, which gave evening courses to part-time students leading to London University degrees. Through his teaching there, and numerous plain and un-intimidating books, Joad introduced hundreds of people to Plato, Aristotle and Russell, and to general metaphysics conceived as a justification for mildly progressive politics and a protection against nihilistic scepticism. During the 1940s his work on the

radio version of the *Brains Trust*, with his celebrated catchphrase 'it depends what you mean by...', gave many listeners their only inkling of the procedures of professional philosophy.

But Joad was not respected by his colleagues. He was proud of his doctorate, and liked to be called 'Dr Joad', which excited their humorous contempt. He naturally preferred to be called 'Professor', though he had no right to the title. People said he took all his ideas and phrases from Russell, who is reported to have refused to review his books because 'modesty forbids'. Russell despised him anyway, and deliberately mispronounced his name as 'Jo-ad', with two syllables, as if he were an old testament prophet.³⁸ Like the rest of the philosophical establishment, he was amused when, in 1948, the self-righteous Joad was convicted for travelling by train without a ticket – a disgrace which, in those days, precluded any further work for the BBC.

Russell, Ayer and Joad were by far the best-known English philosophers of the fifties – apart from Colin Wilson, that is. But Russell was already very old, and Joad had become ridiculous well before his death in 1953. Thus it became the common opinion that English philosophy was dominated by scientistic Logical Positivism, and that the 'school of English philosophers', as Colin Wilson put it, was 'led by Professor Ayer'.³⁹ In fact, though, nearly all the energy of English academic philosophy in the fifties came from Oxford, where attitudes to Positivism and A.J. Ayer were cool, to say the least.

The dominant philosophical journal of the time was *Mind*, and at the end of 1947 the editorship was transferred from G.E. Moore, professor of philosophy at Cambridge, to Gilbert Ryle, who had been teaching at Oxford since 1924, and became a professor there in 1945. In the Oxford of the thirties, Ryle was the only teacher who kept in touch with contemporary European philosophy, and he criticized the broad idealism of R.G. Collingwood as hopelessly old-fashioned. Ryle was initially a follower of Croce, and in 1929 he published a perceptive essay on Heidegger's

Being and Time – which, he claimed, ‘marks a big advance in the application of the “Phenomenological Method” – though I may say at once that I suspect that this advance is an advance towards disaster’.⁴⁰ Ryle also introduced his students to the work of Wittgenstein, who was then unknown in Oxford, and Jean Nicod; in 1932 it was Ryle who advised his student A.J. Ayer to go and study in Vienna.⁴¹

Once installed as editor of *Mind*, Ryle launched what looks in retrospect like a systematic campaign to conquer the commanding heights of philosophy in England and its cultural colonies. He gathered together about twenty colleagues in Oxford, all considerably younger than himself.⁴² By galvanizing them into writing, especially about each other, in the pages of *Mind*, he gave English academic philosophy in the fifties an energy and sense of purpose such as it has never had before or since.

One of Ryle’s main lieutenants was P.F. Strawson, who was to look back over the decade with extraordinary wistfulness. In an anonymous lead article in the *Times Literary Supplement* in 1960, he recalled that the late forties and early fifties had brought with them ‘a new method, a new idea, in English philosophy’. The new technique opened up ‘a whole world of infinite subtlety and diversity’ and ‘captured the imaginations’ of many students just as university life was starting up again after the war. The revolutionary ‘linguistic method’ meant that ‘a new level of refinement and accuracy in conceptual awareness’ had become attainable. It seemed likely that all the problems of philosophy would soon be definitively solved, and people debated how long it would take to ‘finish off’ the subject completely. Philosophy at the beginning of the fifties was, in short, in ‘a revolutionary situation in which every new move was delightfully subversive and liberating’.⁴³ One fine summer’s day, in fact, a young man who was strolling down Turl Street in Oxford with the elderly Professor Paton was inspired to exclaim: ‘Never has there been such a blooming of philosophy in the whole history of the world.’ (‘An almost lyrical remark’, as Paton commented, and one with which he heartily disagreed.)⁴⁴

The golden age of Oxford philosophy opened with the publication of Ryle's *The Concept of Mind* in 1949, and was maintained until 1959, which saw the publication of Strawson's *Individuals*, and *Thought and Action* by Stuart Hampshire. But though the organizational leadership was provided by Ryle, the intellectual inspiration came from someone else – J.L. Austin, who was born in 1910. The happy period closed with his sudden death in February 1960. By that time, as Strawson put it, 'the revolutionary ferment had quite subsided'.⁴⁵

At the time of his death, the bibliography of Austin's works comprised – apart from a few reviews and a translation of Frege – just three lectures and four symposium papers, published over a period of twenty years. All were written in the shiniest prose, rhythmically ingratiating, mannered, and not afraid of seeming pleased with itself. (One lecture begins, for example: 'Are *cans* constitutionally iffy? Whenever, that is, we say that we can do something, is there an *if* in the offing – suppressed, it may be, but due nevertheless to appear when we set out our sentence in full or when we give an explanation of its meaning?'⁴⁶) Their arguments are cryptic, however, and their conclusions elusive, so a reader is liable to end up unsure what Austin was really trying to say. But he was, in his way, a powerful lecturer – on account, paradoxically, of his asperity, and his complete lack of animation and humour. The journalist Ved Mehta attended one of his lectures, 'just out of curiosity', and was 'entranced by his performance'.

To look at, he was a tall and thin man, a sort of parody on the dessicated don. His face suggested an osprey. His voice was flat and metallic, and seemed to be stuck on a note of disillusion. It sounded like a telephone speaking by itself. The day I was present, he opened his lecture by reading aloud a page from Ayer's *The Problem of Knowledge*. He read it in a convincing way, and then he began taking it to bits: 'What does he mean by this?' ... I was told that Austin performed like this every day, mocking, ridiculing, caricaturing, exaggerating, never flagging in his work of demolition, while the sceptical undergraduates watched, amused and bemused, for behind the performance – the legend – there was the voice of distilled intelligence.⁴⁷

For his disciple G.J. Warnock, Austin was a genius, even though he might not live up to the popular idea of one.

Nevertheless, he did succeed in haunting most of the philosophers in England, and to his colleagues it seemed that his terrifying intelligence was never at rest. Many of them used to wake up in the night with a vision of the stringy, wiry Austin standing over their pillow like a bird of prey. Their daylight hours were no better. They would write some philosophical sentences and then read them over as Austin might, in an expressionless, frigid voice, and their blood would run cold. Some of them were so intimidated by the mere fact of his existence that they weren't able to publish a single article during his lifetime.⁴⁸

Like the Logical Positivists, the Oxford philosophers were united by a conviction that 'traditional metaphysics' was thoroughly misconceived. Ryle's *The Concept of Mind* embodied this approach by arguing that metaphysical positions such as Idealism and Materialism were based on a failure to see that mental words should be analysed in terms of 'dispositional' or hypothetical sentences as opposed to categorical ones. This analysis, which was supposed to dispose of the 'mythical' idea of the mind as 'a ghost in the machine', provided the starting point for one of the central preoccupations of Oxford philosophy: 'Philosophy of Mind' or 'Philosophical Psychology'.

But the Oxfordians were also concerned with ethics (or rather *meta-ethics*, as some of them called it, since what was at stake was the status of ethical thinking in general, rather than any specific questions of right and wrong). Here the canonical text was R.M. Hare's *The Language of Morals* (1952). Hare maintained that, while the positivists were right to reject the idea that moral judgements could be objectively true or false, they were wrong to conclude that moral principles were no more than projected private emotions. They had neglected the 'logic' of moral choice.

According to Hare, moral discourse consisted in 'prescriptions'. What differentiated moral prescriptions from ordinary ones was that they were 'universalizable': you had to apply them to everyone, including yourself. The beauty of this theory was that

it combined a disillusionment with the idea of objective ethical values, with a belief in inescapable norms of behaviour. In fact Hare's theory was worked out while he was a prisoner of war in Singapore and Thailand: it was in this 'constantly disintegrating situation', as he recalled, that he reached the conclusion that it was pointless and dangerous to look for a foundation for values in the facts of society or nature.⁴⁹ And his proposal had a distinctly progressivist aspect, since it was meant to destroy the metaphysical prejudices which encouraged people to 'rest content with their society's way of life'.⁵⁰ Hare's argument, however, drew not on endlessly debatable matters of prior political allegiance, but on sharp, dry considerations about the logic of moral language.

If there was a single dominant theme in English high culture in the fifties, it was a taste for austerity, and dislike of 'romantic reaction'.⁵¹ The rejection of metaphysics by the Oxford philosophers participated in the same puritanical mood. J.L. Austin called Ryle 'a *philosophe terrible*', and Stuart Hampshire noticed that *The Concept of Mind* expressed 'a sharply personal and definite view of the world: a world of solid and manageable objects, without hidden recesses, each visibly functioning in its own appropriate pattern'.⁵² Iris Murdoch described Hare's *Language of Morals* as 'expressing the current position' because of its 'elimination of metaphysics from ethics'. It presented us, as she said with a certain awe, with 'a stripped and empty scene'.⁵³ These same attitudes could be detected, if one cared to look for them, in the Festival of Britain, the architecture of the Royal Festival Hall, and in Benjamin Britten's *Billy Budd*, the sculptures of Henry Moore, the paintings of Ben Nicholson, and the work of 'Movement' poets such as Philip Larkin.⁵⁴

The theme of austerity links the Oxford philosophers not only with Logical Positivism but also with the 'existentialism' that excited Colin Wilson and his admirers: in Ryle, as in Sartre, there was a rejection of the 'cartesian' conception of a cozy inner world of private subjectivity; in Hare, as in Camus,

an affirmation of moral responsibility despite the collapse in the credibility of any metaphysical foundations for morals.

These similarities did not fail to strike Dr Joad, who in his last years became a Christian and felt obliged, as a consequence, to defend 'metaphysics' from the atheism, immoralism, nihilism and vulgarity which he saw spreading all around him. In 1948 he contributed a pseudonymous attack on Oxford philosophy to the *New Statesman*. In Oxford, he claimed, *Language, Truth and Logic* had 'acquired almost the status of a philosophic Bible'. This was fostering 'anti-aesthetic Philistinism', and – though there might be 'no direct connection between Logical Positivism and Fascism' – Joad expected that Fascism would soon come in to fill up 'the vacuum left by an absence of concern with fundamental human values'.

Ayer – who was more accustomed to accusations of Bolshevism than of Fascism – pointed out in reply that Fascists tended to favour metaphysics, but Joad responded by calling on philosophers to return to their traditional duty of 'revealing truth and increasing virtue'. If Ayer was right, he concluded dolefully, 'philosophy has no wisdom to offer the young and no light or leading to give to the times'.⁵⁵ In a book designed to substantiate his accusations, Joad argued that the tendency of Logical Positivism was to pull down all the barriers that ought to prevent a person from leading 'that life which Plato called "democratic" – a Bohemian in art, a Laodicean in affairs, a sceptic in philosophy and religion, an inconstant in love and a dilettante in life'.⁵⁶

But the adoption of attitudes for or against 'metaphysics', 'romanticism' and 'virtue' may not have had much to do with the real springs of initiative in English professional philosophy in the fifties. The Oxford philosophers were certainly opposed to metaphysics, but they were also, and more vehemently, opposed to positivism. Indeed Joad himself referred to 'a well-known Oxford historian' who claimed that Oxford philosophy spent all its time 'debating whether it was once correct to describe it as logical positivism'.⁵⁷ If Oxford philosophers advised their students to read *Language, Truth and Logic*, it was for its prose rather than its

doctrines. Austin devoted several of his lecture courses to the destruction of Ayer, and G.J. Warnock fell into the language of defendants before McCarthy's UnAmerican Activities Committee when he affirmed 'I would like to say in very plain terms that I am not, nor is any philosopher of my acquaintance, a Logical Positivist'.⁵⁸ A.J. Ayer himself would claim that – 'in a way' – Logical Positivism was 'a thing of the past'.⁵⁹ In 1959 he was at last given a professorship at Oxford. Ryle openly told him that he had opposed the appointment; but Austin was not so frank. Hostility to luxuriant metaphysics was not, on its own, the secret of the Oxfordian revolution.⁶⁰

What the Oxford revolutionaries prided themselves on was not their hostility to metaphysics – which they shared with Logical Positivism and Existentialism – but the special kind of precaution they took against it: the 'linguistic' method. The idea was that metaphysics arose from misunderstandings of 'ordinary language'. The remedy would be to get a clearer picture of how 'ordinary language' really functions; and the only way to do this was through the techniques developed, above all, by J.L. Austin.

During the fifties, Austin presided over an informal seminar, the 'Saturday mornings', attended by a dozen or so of his younger colleagues (Ryle was thus excluded). Sometimes Austin led the discussion, and on other occasions they read together – Aristotle, Wittgenstein, Frege, Merleau-Ponty, Chomsky. Or rather they read brief passages, for Geoffrey Warnock recalled that 'Austin's favoured unit of discussion in such cases was the *sentence* – not the paragraph or chapter, still less the book as a whole'. His assumption was that books should be read 'by taking the sentences one at a time, thoroughly settling the sense (or hash) of each before proceeding to the next one'. (This method of reading, as Warnock admits, 'naturally worked out rather slowly'.) They also used to make lists of English words and phrases and try to discriminate their meanings: for example, *disposition, trait, propensity, characteristic, habit, inclination*

and *tendency*; or *tool*, *instrument*, *implement*, *utensil*, *appliance*, *equipment*, *apparatus*, *gear*, *kit*, *device* and *gimmick*; or *highly* and *very*. The idea was to reveal the intellectual riches that were sedimented in natural languages: 'How clever language is!' as H.P. Grice exclaimed.⁶¹ The Oxford philosophers would turn these riches to theoretical use, so confounding the traditional metaphysicians, who had not been aware of the pearls spread before them, and spurning the Logical Positivists too, who had turned away from ordinary language towards the false gods of science and formal logic.

The Austinian method was soon transformed, at Oxford, into a new discipline, *Philosophical Logic*, which formed the third part of Oxford philosophy, alongside Philosophy of Mind and Ethics. Its architect was P.F. Strawson, who defined its principles in an essay which appeared in *Mind* in 1950. It was meant as a demolition of Russell, but it concluded with a bold dismissal of the claims of formal logic in general. 'Neither Aristotelian nor Russellian rules', Strawson says, 'give the exact logic of any expression of ordinary language; for ordinary language has no exact logic'.⁶² This argument was blatantly question-begging of course: if formal logic and ordinary language diverge, it cannot be assumed that the fault lies with formal logic. But perhaps what the Oxfordians objected to in Russell was not his preference for formal logic over ordinary language, but – as Warnock was to put it – his Procrustean attempt to 'impose the neat simplicities of logic upon the troublesome complexities of language'.⁶³ This too might seem inconclusive: the Russellians could argue that logic described not the vagaries of surface grammar, but the immovable structures of valid reasoning as such. But in that case, the Oxfordians could reply, in a phrase of Iris Murdoch's: 'there may be no deep structure'.⁶⁴

The affection of the Oxford philosophers for ordinary language was open to another obvious objection: even if ordinary language does embody some subtle distinctions, they may not be particularly intelligent ones. Russell had already pointed this

out in 1914 when he spoke of 'the prehistoric metaphysicians to whom common sense is due'.⁶⁵ And he restated it forty years later when retaliating against attacks from the Oxfordians. He described them as 'the "Philosophy-Without-Tears" School, so named because it makes philosophy very much easier than it has ever been before: in order to be a competent philosopher, it is only necessary to study Fowler's *Modern English Usage*'. Oxford philosophy was concerned, Russell said, 'not with the world and our relation to it, but only with the different ways in which silly people can say silly things'.⁶⁶

'I don't like Oxford philosophers', he told Ved Mehta. 'Don't like them. They have made trivial something very great. Don't think much of their apostle Ryle. He's just another clever man.'⁶⁷ Ryle, he wrote on another occasion, 'seems to believe that a philosopher need not know anything scientific beyond what was known in the time of our ancestors when they dyed themselves with woad'.⁶⁸

The Oxford philosophers were curiously unperturbed by this criticism. A lecture Austin gave in 1956 contained one of their few attempts at a methodological manifesto, and it was hardly a rallying cry. 'To proceed from "ordinary language", that is, by examining *what we should say when*' is, Austin claims, 'at least *one* philosophical method'. In response to Russell's disparagement of 'the metaphysics of the Stone Age' Austin observed that

our common stock of words embodies all the distinctions men have found worth drawing, and the connexions they have found worth marking, in the lifetimes of many generations: these surely are likely to be more numerous, more sound, since they have stood up to the long test of the survival of the fittest, and more subtle, at least in all ordinary and reasonably practical matters, than any that you or I are likely to think up in our arm-chairs of an afternoon – the most favoured alternative method.

But if this defence should fail, Austin added that, since 'words are our tools', it must be a good idea to try to 'prise them off the world' if only in order to 'realize their inadequacies and arbitrariness',

and 'forearm ourselves against the traps that language sets us'. This is a fair precept, no doubt; but as a response to Russell's criticisms, it seems wilfully feeble. Austin said he was not seeking for 'the Last Word ... if there is such a thing', as though he found it impertinent to ask what was special about the supposedly revolutionary philosophical school of which he was the intellectual leader. 'So much for the cackle' – that is how Austin concluded his methodological manifesto for ordinary language philosophy.⁶⁹

It was as if the Oxford philosophers could not bear to discuss the new method which was supposed to set them apart from their predecessors. It may be indeed that what distinguished them from the Positivists and the Russellians and indeed the Existentialists was not any methodological programme, but something which belonged to what might be called their collective institutional unconscious. R.M. Hare brought some of its features to light in a lecture designed to explain 'Philosophy in Great Britain' to German audiences. He suggested that the revolution he represented was based not so much on a theory of philosophical method as on the pedagogical practices of Oxford University. 'We have seen', he said, 'what monstrous philosophical edifices have been erected by slipping, surreptitiously, from the ordinary uses of words to extraordinary uses which are never explained; we spend most of our working time explaining our *own* uses of words to our pupils'.⁷⁰ This peculiar behaviour took place in the individual tutorials which had typified Oxford education since the middle of the nineteenth century. The student would visit a tutor's room once a week and read out an essay. Tutors might reciprocate with helpful information; but often they would respond with the simple but petrifying question, 'what exactly do you mean by this word?' Or sometimes, like the great Victorian tutor Benjamin Jowett, they would maintain a menacing gloomy silence until finally their trembling young charge was dismissed.

The effect of the system on both students and teachers was, as Hare observed, quite profound.

The student is very soon made to realize that everything that he says in an essay has to be justified before a highly skilled and usually merciless critic, not only in respect of its truth, but also in respect of relevance, accuracy, significance and clarity. Anything that is put in to fill in space, or which is ambiguous or vague or pretentious, or which contains more sound than significance, or whose object is anything else but to express genuine thought, is ruthlessly exposed for what it is. ... What the tutor can do is to teach his pupil to think effectively; to express his thought clearly to himself and to others; to make distinctions where there are distinctions to be made, and thus avoid unnecessary confusion – and not to use long words (or short ones) without being able to explain what they mean.⁷¹

For students, the educational value of tutorials was that they frightened them into internalizing some rigorous norms of intellectual or at least verbal continence. (And perhaps for the Oxford philosophy tutors of that time, they also had the psychical function of discharging the terror inspired in them by Austin.)

Tutorials could be described as providing an arena for exercises in translation and paraphrase. Ever since the Renaissance, after all, humanistic education had centred on translating between ancient and modern languages, so as to make linguistic sensibilities more supple and self-aware. In the twentieth century, the same benefits were looked for within a single language. The educational advantages of intra-linguistic translation had been theorized in England in the twenties and thirties by the followers of Bentham and Nietzsche who supported the cause of Basic English – an artificial dialect which was supposed to be able to communicate almost any conceivable message, using only a very simple vocabulary of 850 words.⁷² It is well known that – thanks especially to I.A. Richards and William Empson – Basic English had a lasting effect on the formation of English Literature as an academic discipline; but it probably had just as much bearing on the development of English philosophy. For, though it may have advertised itself as proposing a philosophical theory of language and a linguistic theory of philosophy, in reality what it offered was a linguistic, and primarily oral, practice of philosophizing. English philosophy became an

infinite practice of translation – most especially, the translation of vague, figurative, confused or metaphysical expressions into the simplest and most austere language that could be devised. (For the Russellians, the target language was formal logic; for the Oxfordians, it was plain-style English.) Those who had been drilled in it would for ever after respond to questions by rephrasing them; only then (if ever) would they proceed to an answer. Philosophy in this context was not a set of texts or theories, but a habit of prophylactic paraphrase, based on Rylean ‘anti-nonsense rules’.⁷³ Its aim was to promote mental hygiene and prevent the development of what Austin called ‘chuckle-headedness’.⁷⁴

In principle, tutorials could be the vehicle for all sorts of theoretical messages; but for the Oxford philosophers the form of the tutorial defined the content and goals of their discipline too. Tutors found themselves obliged to invent a new type of exam question to test the effectiveness of their work: questions calling for quick-witted reflection on linguistic forms, rather than the exposition or criticism of established bodies of theory. A typical new-style question from Ryle might be: ‘Why cannot a traveller reach London gradually?’ Austin would prefer ‘Why is “I warn you...” the beginning of a warning, but “I insult you...” not the beginning of an insult?’⁷⁵

Historical and textual scholarship were not a high priority for the Oxford philosophers. ‘On the whole we share Plato’s attitude towards the written word; it is a *pis aller*’, as Hare put it.

British philosophers, by and large, will not be bothered with a philosophical thesis which is not stated briefly and in clear terms. ... So on the whole we do not write long or difficult books; if our ideas are understood by our colleagues in the course of verbal discussion, that is enough for us. ... We do not think it a *duty* to write books; still less do we think it a duty to read more than a few of the books which others write.⁷⁶

But, despite their cultivated indifference to historical scholarship, the Oxford philosophers had a clear sense of history and their place in it. ‘The wise rambler’, as Ryle put it, must occasionally

'look back over his shoulder in order to link up the place he has got to with the country through which he has recently passed.' The 'revolution in philosophy', he believed, was connected with the 'laicizing of our culture', on the one hand, and the 'professionalizing of philosophy', on the other. As an undergraduate in the 1920s, he had found that philosophy had already lost all connection with theology, and the agonies of faith and doubt; since then it had developed into 'a separate academic subject', and, whether they liked it or not, 'philosophers had now to be philosophers' philosophers'.⁷⁷

'Ontologising is out', said Ryle; philosophy's only future was as 'a second-order business', whose proper domain was not reality itself, but the words and concepts with which people try to pin it down.⁷⁸ At the beginning of the fifties, Strawson had promised that with the new philosophical logic he was 'on the way to solving a number of ancient logical and metaphysical puzzles',⁷⁹ and R.M. Hare found that progress in ethical theory was so rapid that a book would become out of date between composition and publication.⁸⁰ One of the enthusiasts – an unidentified 'lady' – is said to have opened an argument with the phrase, 'now that we have escaped from the age of error'.⁸¹ Afterwards, Strawson recalled people assuming that all the 'ancient rubbish' would soon be carted away and that 'the total dissolution' of all the old problems and the 'final extinction' of metaphysics were 'foreseeably near'.⁸²

The Oxford revolutionaries accepted that they had some debts to the past however. On its publication in 1949, Stuart Hampshire hailed *The Concept of Mind* as the culmination of a development of certain 'methods of linguistic analysis' of which there had been 'many guarded adumbrations and esoteric hints in British philosophy in the last fifteen years'.⁸³ At the same time, recognition was given to the achievements of an earlier revolution – the 'revolution against idealism' which had been carried out, or so they supposed, by G.E. Moore and Bertrand Russell in about 1900, in Cambridge. (Very slowly, though, it came to

be acknowledged that some of the credit for creating modern 'philosophical logic' should be passed further back, and over the channel, to Gottlob Frege.⁸⁴)

As the Oxfordians saw it, the post-idealist settlement divided into two wings, one loyal to Russell, the other to Moore. Russell's wing was called philosophical analysis, and was boosted by the adherence of the young Wittgenstein.⁸⁵ Russell and Wittgenstein tried to get behind what they regarded as the messy forms of everyday thought, in order to discover a structural skeleton of formal logic, based on a foundation of incontrovertible empirical knowledge. But, from the Oxfordian point of view, their project was ill-conceived. The Russellians aimed to avoid metaphysics, but they failed to see that natural science and formal logic were themselves metaphysical.⁸⁶ Formal logic, moreover – as opposed to the 'informal' or 'philosophical' variety being developed by Strawson – was of no more relevance to philosophy than any other branch of mathematics.⁸⁷ Scientistic philosophers might be brilliant at 'formal demonstrations and derivations', but that did not save their 'philosophizing' from being hopelessly poor.⁸⁸

The revolutionaries felt more affinity with Moore's side of the post-idealist settlement. Moore's writings made a virtue of proceeding very, very slowly, clinging desperately to the intuitions of common sense for fear of being blown away by gusty speculation, and Oxford philosophy can be seen as a linguistified version of Moorean caution.⁸⁹ The Oxfordians were sorry that Moore viewed moral values as objective qualities, and that to this extent he was 'not wholly of the modern time'.⁹⁰ But they forgave him because of his exemplary philosophical courage – a 'courage to seem naive', which found expression not so much in Moore's writings as in his conversation, and indeed in his celebrated seraphic silences.⁹¹ Repeatedly, Moore was compared to the child in Hans Christian Andersen's tale, who had the courage to say that the emperor had no clothes. Andersen's brave little boy was a model with which all the Oxford philosophers liked to identify.⁹²

But Moore was eclipsed by another figure, far more exotic and controversial, and the only person in twentieth-century English philosophy who conducted himself in a way that corresponded to the popular idea of a tormented genius. At the beginning of 1950, in the introduction to the first anthology representing the new philosophical school, Antony Flew asserted that all those associated with it 'would wish to acknowledge their debt to the genius of one man above all'. He was referring to someone 'whose name is almost unknown outside the world of academic philosophy', although 'everyone who belongs to that world will see throughout this volume marks of the enormous influence, direct and indirect, of the oral teachings of Professor Wittgenstein'.⁹³

For the purposes of the Oxford philosophers, it was necessary to make a sharp distinction between two Wittgensteins. The early Wittgenstein, comrade-in-arms of Bertrand Russell, gave up philosophy after completing the *Tractatus*, and went back to his native Austria to lead a simple life. But in 1929, a second Wittgenstein, who had abandoned the 'analytic' dogmatism of the first, became a fellow of Trinity College Cambridge. Ten years later he succeeded to Moore's chair, but he resigned in 1947, fearing that his teaching was having a bad influence on students. He published nothing except a brief article in 1929, which he immediately disowned. But he gave informal lectures, and copies of notes which he dictated to his students between 1933 and 1935 were circulated widely.⁹⁴ Wittgenstein's warnings about the folly of attempting to deal with philosophical problems in the way science does ('this tendency is the real source of metaphysics, and leads the philosopher into complete darkness') were alleged to have devastated the project of Philosophical Analysis, as Russell and the first Wittgenstein had envisaged it.⁹⁵ Two Wittgensteinian slogans – 'Don't ask for the meaning, ask for the use' and 'Every statement has its own logic' – were regarded by the Oxford philosophers as essential clues to correct philosophical method.⁹⁶

But Wittgenstein died in April 1951. His *Philosophical Investigations* were published, in German but with an English translation

on facing pages, in 1953. However, their lack of systematic, paraphrasable argumentation, and their explicit repudiation of 'any kind of theory' and 'all *explanation*'⁹⁷ were not particularly congenial to many of those who till then had thought of themselves as his followers. The *Investigations* were welcomed by Strawson in a magisterial review in *Mind* as the work of 'the first philosopher of the age'. Although he had some reservations – Strawson himself was dreaming of 'a purged kind of metaphysics, with more modest and less disreputable claims than the old' – he concluded with satisfaction that the publication of the *Investigations* would 'consolidate the philosophical revolution for which, more than anyone else, its author was responsible'.⁹⁸

During the fifties, the problem of the significance of Wittgenstein became more and more agonizing for the Oxford revolutionaries. To some commentators, it appeared that the works of Ryle, Austin and the rest of those who discussed each other's work in *Mind* were nothing but watered-down summaries of the late Wittgenstein. Bertrand Russell, now in his eighties, was displeased at being 'superseded in the opinion of many British philosophers' by his former student. He continued to admire the *Tractatus*, but not the *Investigations*, which he thought contained nothing but 'suave evasion of paradoxes'.⁹⁹

In Oxford, too, there was increasing wariness about Wittgenstein, and mockery of the physical and verbal mannerisms of his 'disciples' – especially Elizabeth Anscombe, his executor and translator. Ryle regarded Wittgenstein as 'a genius and a friend', but was so revolted by the 'incontinent' veneration with which he was surrounded in Cambridge that he pointedly strove to avoid being his 'echo'.¹⁰⁰ Austin did not take Wittgenstein very seriously either, and was famously rude to Anscombe. Warnock recalled that he would sometimes read passages from Wittgenstein in his lectures, with a view to demonstrating 'how incomprehensible and obscure the Austrian philosopher was'.¹⁰¹ There was something about the Austrian which made Oxford philosophers uneasy.

The Oxford revolutionaries saw little philosophical point in studying the history of philosophy, though the college system obliged most of them to teach Plato and Aristotle, as well as 'modern philosophy', meaning the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Descartes to Kant. Nineteenth-century thinkers – especially Hegel and such anti-Hegelians as Kierkegaard, Marx and Nietzsche – were scarcely mentioned at all. This rather dull picture was brightened, however, by a streak of patriotism. When it came to the 'British Empiricists' – Locke, Berkeley and Hume – the Oxford philosophers were willing to admit that the 'revolution' carried out by Russell and Moore had not been 'the thunderbolt that it is popularly supposed to be'.¹⁰² Ayer edited an anthology of *British Empirical Philosophers* to make the national tradition more available to students.¹⁰³ And Iris Murdoch went so far as to describe the Oxford school as the 'present-day version of our traditional empiricism'.¹⁰⁴

The Oxford philosophers' confidence in the category of 'British Empiricism' is surprising in many ways. As a theoretical proposal, the very idea of philosophical national characters is, one might have thought, severely compromised by dubious presuppositions of a metaphysical, idealistic and Hegelian kind. As a matter of historical record, too, it could be more appropriate to see Britain as the home of idealism, from the Cambridge Platonists through the civic humanists and Coleridge to the Christian idealists led by T.H. Green and their successors in the Royal Institute of Philosophy; or of irrationalism and emotionalism, starting with Duns Scotus, and continuing in Burke, Blake, Carlyle, Ruskin and successive generations of British Nietzscheans.

There was also the difficulty of defining Britishness. Of Ayer's five empirical philosophers, only Locke was English: Berkeley was Irish, and Hume, Reid and Mill were all Scottish. Nevertheless, the concept of British Empiricism was peculiarly Anglocentric, and helped to cover up the fact that philosophy had deeper roots and wider resonance in Ireland, Scotland and Wales than in England.¹⁰⁵

Nevertheless, the concept of British Empiricism was called on to do a task which was of considerable importance to the Oxford philosophers. It enabled them to define themselves in contrast with a hated rival, which came to be known, in the course of the decade, by the title of 'continental philosophy'. Continental philosophy, to the Oxfordians, was the epitome of the intellectual habits that their revolution was meant to eradicate: excessive interest in the history of philosophy, failure to respect the gap between philosophy and science, and above all a self-indulgent use of language. The continentals, it was insinuated, followed fashions, not arguments, and if literary intellectuals were attracted to them, this was only because of their skin-deep sex appeal.

Oxfordian attacks on 'continental philosophy' were aggressive, even sadistic. 'The thing wrong with the Existentialists and the other Continental philosophers', as Hare put it, 'is that they haven't had their noses rubbed in the necessity of saying exactly what they mean. I sometimes think it's because they don't have a tutorial system.'¹⁰⁶ The reviews section of *Mind* tried to keep readers informed about the antics of the foreign colleagues. Every work of continental philosophy turned out, upon careful examination, to be pretentious rubbish: some faith perhaps, but not enough hope, and a complete lack of clarity. Reviewing a German book on relativism in 1951, T.D. Weldon could hardly get past the author's 'fatal liking for long abstract and hyphenated words of which no explanation is offered' – a proclivity which he knew 'philosophers in this country' would find intolerable. The German philosopher would not make any progress, Weldon said, 'until he pays less attention to high-sounding abstractions and devotes some time to the more mundane study of ordinary discourse'.¹⁰⁷ A year later, C.A. Mace amused himself at the expense of Sartre. The Frenchman might be of some interest to 'those who entertain the hypothesis that philosophical reflexion may not infrequently serve as a medium through which personal emotional problems find their expression', Mace said. But still it

was clear that 'a rough count would be sufficient to show that only a small number of philosophers actually feel sick when they contemplate the contingency of the existent.' The only existential problem raised by Sartre was how anyone could count him as a philosopher.¹⁰⁸ Isaiah Berlin too gazed into the huge gulf which divided philosophers in most of 'the continent of Europe' from those in 'the Anglo-American world'. The chasm was so deep that 'philosophers on one side of it can scarcely bring themselves to think of those on the other as being occupied with the same subject as themselves'. And the reason for the difference was clear: intellectual progress had passed the continentals by. Philosophers from 'the Latin countries' had 'lived through the great logico-philosophical revolution of the last half-century, initiated by Frege and Russell – perhaps the most complete transformation of thought in this field since the seventeenth century – without being noticeably affected by it'.¹⁰⁹ Reassurance was offered by P.F. Strawson, reviewing a French work on Virginia Woolf: 'Mr Chastaing places Virginia Woolf where she, no doubt, belongs: in the British Empiricist tradition.'¹¹⁰

A.J. Ayer, too – though disdainful of the provincialism of *Mind* and proud of his cosmopolitanism, his affinity for French culture, and his friendships with Wahl, Camus and Merleau-Ponty – liked to join his Oxford colleagues when it came to making fun of the continentals. Complaining about the poor reception of *Language, Truth and Logic* in France, he commented that 'one of Descartes's least happy legacies to France has been the belief that empirical questions can be decided *a priori*, and one of these *a priori* judgements is that among foreign philosophers only the Germans need be taken seriously.'¹¹¹ And German philosophy was actually even worse than French, since it was dominated by Heidegger the Nazi – whose work, though it might raise 'some points of psychological interest', was altogether bogus in its 'pretensions to philosophical profundity'.¹¹² A story from early in the decade shows, however, that Ayer knew how to put the Heideggerians in their place.

I remember an occasion on which an official of the British Council asked me to lunch with a German professor, said to be a leading phenomenologist, whom the Council had invited on a tour of British universities. Neither the professor's English nor my colloquial German was very fluent; our host was self-effacing and conversation languished. There seemed nothing for it but to resort to talking shop. 'What are you working on now?' I asked the professor. 'It is complicated', he replied, 'but I will give an example of the kind of problem I am trying to solve. What is the essence of a glass?' On the whole I counted myself an opponent of the type of linguistic philosophy that was coming into fashion at Oxford, but here it seemed to me to meet the case. 'Surely', I said, 'there is nothing very perplexing about the way in which the word "glass" and its counterparts in other languages are ordinarily used.' He looked at me with contempt. 'I will give you the answer', he said. 'The essence of the glass is to be empty.' I made a sign to our host who filled our glasses. This did not please the professor who remarked irritably that the essence of a glass with wine was not the same as the essence of a glass without wine. 'But', he went on, 'I will put to you a deeper question. What is the essence of emptiness? (*Was ist das Wesen von der Leere?*)' 'Ah', I said, 'that really is deep', and I went on to talk about the universities that he had visited.¹¹³

The Oxford philosophers evidently enjoyed telling each other funny stories about foreigners. This is how R.M. Hare, for example, would describe what happened 'when a typical Oxford philosopher meets a typical German philosopher in a philosophical discussion'.

The German philosopher will say something relating to his own philosophical views; the British philosopher will then say that he cannot understand what has been said, and will ask for an elucidation. The German will take this, the first time that it happens to him, for an encouragement, and will go on expounding his views; but he will be disappointed by the reaction. What was desired, it turns out, was not more of the same sort of thing; what the British philosopher wanted was to take just one sentence that the German had uttered – say the first sentence – or perhaps, for a start, just one word in this sentence; and he wanted an explanation given of the way in which this word was being used. ... Nothing pleases us so much as to sit back and have a German metaphysician explain to us, if he can, how he is going to get his metaphysical system started. And as he is usually unable to do this, the discussion never gets on to what he thinks of as the meat of the theory. This is a great disappointment to him...¹¹⁴

The poor German might have started to retaliate by grilling Hare over his failure to distinguish between the word 'Britain' and the word 'Oxford'; but in the end it was a game the foreigners were bound to lose. If they agreed to translate themselves into a language acceptable to their hosts, they would have conceded that they had nothing un-Oxfordian to say; but if they refused, they would have condemned themselves as deliberate obfuscators.

In 1958 a small platoon of Oxford philosophers attended the fourth philosophical conference at Royaumont, which their French colleagues had organized in the hope of informing themselves about the state of 'analytic philosophy' in Britain and America.¹¹⁵ It was hardly a meeting of minds: the French hosts manifested a respectful curiosity about 'Anglo-saxon philosophy', and 'the Oxford School', but the 'chorus of Oxford analysts' huddled together in self-defence, as if they feared some kind of intellectual infection from the over-friendly Continentals.¹¹⁶ In a session on 'Phenomenology versus *The Concept of Mind*', Ryle attributed 'the wide gulf that has existed for three quarters of a century between Anglo-Saxon and Continental philosophy' to the fact that the Continentals were unaware of 'the massive developments of our logical theory'. He accused his hosts of being stuck with the discredited procedures of Husserlian phenomenology, which – with flamboyant inaccuracy – he described as 'Platonised Cartesianism'. Husserl, according to Ryle, had been 'bewitched by the Platonic idea that conceptual inquiries were scrutinies of the super-objects that he called "Essences"', and this had led him to the arrogant idea that philosophy was 'the Mistress Science'. The British could never make such a mistake:

I guess that our thinkers have been immunised against the idea of philosophy as the Mistress Science by the fact that their daily lives in Cambridge and Oxford Colleges have kept them in personal contact with real scientists. Claims to Führership vanish when postprandial joking begins. Husserl wrote as if he had never met a scientist – or a joke.¹¹⁷

Despite Ryle's reproaches against anyone who read Husserl 'too assiduously', Herman van Bréda attempted to set Ryle right about Husserl's relation to Platonism, though he did have to concede that Husserl had not enjoyed 'the distinguished privilege of living within the community of a "college"'. Father van Bréda also gently deprecated Ryle's phrase about the philosophical *Führer*, and suggested, with some justice, that if anyone was 'hypostatizing concepts and words', it was Ryle: 'the Oxford analysts are great Platonists, but Husserl was not'.¹¹⁸

Ryle brushed this aside by saying that he did not care what Husserl happened to think – which was rather impolite considering that he had raised the subject in the first place. Austin also gave offence by saying he had no faith in any philosophical methods at all, most especially those 'which are currently in vogue on the continent'. Ayer earned gratitude for making it clear to van Bréda that he was wasting his time: analytical philosophy as a whole, he explained, had a 'negative attitude ... towards all philosophical work on the continent'.¹¹⁹ When Merleau-Ponty asked Ryle whether he thought that 'correctness' was the 'cardinal virtue of thinking', or whether there was not a different and more demanding value, that of truth, Ryle responded quite obtusely by saying that he had no interest in the trivialities of grammar. Merleau-Ponty, however – who had read Ryle, a courtesy which was not reciprocated – said that Ryle's work was 'not so strange to us, and that the distance, if there is a distance, is one that he puts between us rather than one I find there'.¹²⁰

During the fifties, the young revolutionaries of Ryle's army established a virtual monopoly over university philosophy in England. They managed to contain the influence of all other potential philosophical power brokers – most notably Karl Popper at the London School of Economics.¹²¹ But their takeover remained almost unknown outside the world of academic philosophy, at least until the end of 1959; and when fame came, it was not in a form that pleased them. On 5 November, *The Times* published

a letter from Bertrand Russell complaining that *Mind* would not review a book which attempted a systematic demolition of Oxford philosophy.

I now learn that Professor Ryle, the editor of *Mind*, has written to Messrs Gollancz [the publishers] refusing to have this book reviewed in *Mind* on the ground that it is abusive. ... If all books that do not endorse Professor Ryle's opinions are to be boycotted in the pages of *Mind*, that hitherto respected periodical will sink to the level of a mutual admiration organ of a coterie.¹²²

The book Russell was supporting was *Words and Things* by Ernest Gellner, a young man who had himself escaped from Oxford philosophy (he had even written for *Mind* in the early fifties) in order to become an anthropologist at the London School of Economics. Gellner had got to know Austin at Oxford, and learned to detest him deeply: 'I had an impression of someone very strongly obsessed with never being wrong, and using all kinds of dialectical devices to avoid being wrong.' His lectures had been like 'a creeping barrage, going into endless detail in a very slow and fumbling way'. By this method, Austin used to 'browbeat people into acceptance; it was a kind of brainwashing'.¹²³

In *Words and Things* Gellner offered a sarcastic but brilliant summary of Oxford philosophy – that 'strange love-child of Wittgenstein's messianism and Oxonian complacency', as he called it. He even contrived to present the characteristic dialectical manoeuvres of the Oxford philosophers in a diagram, and explained how readers could become Oxford philosophers simply by playing parlour games based upon it. The object of the game was to avoid having to confront any serious theoretical issues. Just as thought was muzzled in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by Newspeak, so it was muzzled in Ryle's Oxford by Oldspeak. Because of their apparently populist idea that anything worth saying could be expressed in ordinary English, Gellner called Ryle's troops 'the Narodniks of North Oxford'. At the same time the Conspicuous Triviality of their conversational routines was just an example of the Conspicuous Waste characteristic of a

leisure class; and while it made social sense for the upper classes in Oxford, it would become grotesque when offered to poorer students at the redbrick universities.¹²⁴

Gellner's sociology was not implausible. For a start, the pages of *Who's Who* show that of the twenty leading figures in Oxford philosophy in the fifties, there was only one who did not come from a high-bourgeois family. Similarly, there were only four who did not receive their secondary education in a famous boys' school – they were the four women. And there was only one who was not an undergraduate at Oxford – he went to Cambridge instead. Even at Oxford there can hardly have been a discipline whose staff were drawn from a narrower social base.¹²⁵

To some extent, the Oxford philosophers could be aligned with the remnants of Bloomsbury: certainly they spoke with the same accents; they liked to make use of French phrases; and – as Russell observed – they were 'gentlemanly' in their aversion from taking things too seriously.¹²⁶ This placed a distance between them and the 'proletentious' world of the Angry Young Men: only A.J. Ayer, always anxious to be a London intellectual rather than an Oxford don, was at ease with them.¹²⁷

However, the Oxford philosophers were a generation younger than the Bloomsburys, and their presentation of themselves as plain-speaking revolutionaries identified them with the post-war settlement to which their seniors refused to be reconciled. They complained that they were deliberately cold-shouldered by the London intellectual world, which – after Sartre, Camus and Colin Wilson – was interested only in Ayer, Russell and Popper. They may indeed have had a point: if you count up all the philosophical books reviewed in the *Times Literary Supplement*, only twenty – two a year, or 6 per cent – represented the Oxfordian line, whereas four times that number came from their 'continental' rivals.¹²⁸

The plain prose-style cultivated by the Oxford philosophers was itself enough to offend their cultured elders. The review of *The Concept of Mind* in the *Times Literary Supplement* was

favourable – not surprisingly, since it was by J.L. Austin. Austin commented on Ryle’s sensitivity to ‘the nuances of words’ and his ‘refreshingly wide choice of words, especially of polysyllables’. The excellence of this revolutionary book was a matter of its style, according to Austin, and ‘*le style, c’est Ryle*’.¹²⁹ However, in its survey of ‘The Philosophy of 1951’, the *TLS* was not so sympathetic. The anonymous author picked on the then president of the Aristotelian Society, who was ‘completely the *beau idéal* of the contemporary young philosopher’. This paragon was John Wisdom, the Cambridge prophet of the Oxford revolution.¹³⁰ ‘Dr Wisdom’s mode of writing’, according to the *TLS*, ‘suggests a man self-righteously denying himself many of the resources and all the graces of a literary use of language, as if they were temptations to lure him away from his austere pursuit of an unsullied clarity’. The result was a ‘flat colloquialism’ with hardly a word of more than two syllables, except ‘every’ (a word which, of course, only the classiest speakers would put three syllables into anyway).¹³¹ In *Mind* itself, a representative of the old school lamented that it was becoming rare for philosophy to be written ‘in the language of a gentleman and a scholar’. There had been a disastrous lurch towards ‘that vulgar colloquialism which nervously shuns every word and phrase which would not naturally occur in the conversation of one’s bedmaker or one’s bookmaker’.¹³² Back in the *TLS*, Antony Flew was arraigned for his ‘derisive and bumptious manner’, and for prose which was unreadable because of ‘that unhappy style, at once “blokey” and elaborate, which a number of young Oxford philosophers, all more or less *scuola di Ryle* ... have made so self-consciously their own’.¹³³

Thus the Oxford philosophers could not be quite so confident in their social standing as Gellner alleged. But their consequent defensiveness did nothing to disconfirm his analysis of their intellectual position. They did not respond to him any more than they did to Russell or Joad, or to later left-wing critics like Marcuse and Anderson. All outsiders were bound to miss the point of what

they stood for. You could not understand Oxford philosophy in general, or Austin in particular, if you were only interested in detachable methods or doctrines. It was necessary, as Warnock put it, to attend to those who 'had the advantage of, so to speak, observing at close quarters Austin in action, and of having themselves inhabited, in some cases for many years, the philosophical scene in which he was himself so conspicuous a figure'.¹³⁴ This response is not just a sign of excessive sensitivity to criticism, though. The Oxford philosophers were equally unreceptive to friendly offers to systematize and summarize the intellectual goals that held them together.¹³⁵ Attempts to develop Austin's concept of speech acts in the direction of systematic linguistics, or to extend it in the direction of general social theory,¹³⁶ though they might have pleased Austin himself, were unwelcome to most of his colleagues. The Oxfordian conception of philosophy could not recognize itself apart from its social style.

Outsiders who try to comment on the ordinary language philosophers, whether in admiration or hostility, always run into vertiginous difficulties. Three things are clear: they believed they had a revolutionary mission; they held that this was based on a new 'linguistic' technique, summarizable in the slogan 'Don't ask for the meaning, ask for the use'; and they were implacably opposed to evasiveness or imprecision. But these three propositions did not add up. When asked for a clear definition of their new method, Oxfordians treated the request as inept, and never came up with a straightforward answer.

These inconsistent attitudes had serious theoretical motives, however. The central idea to which the Oxford philosophers were committed – the importance of trying to give lucid translations of concepts or expressions which are confused, misleading or contaminated with prejudice or folly – is an admirable one, undeniably. This kind of linguistic consciousness-raising should play a part in all kinds of education, at every level. In fact it probably does. So to take it as marking a breakthrough into a

new theoretical discipline – ‘philosophical analysis’ perhaps, or ‘linguistic philosophy’ – is implausible, and indeed paradoxical. Ryle had articulated the difficulty as early as 1932, in an article which is often regarded as prophetic of the 1950s:

Sometimes philosophers say that they are analysing or clarifying the ‘concepts’ which are embodied in the ‘judgements’ of the plain man or of the scientist, historian, artist, or who-not. ... But the whole procedure is very odd. For if the expressions under consideration are intelligently used, their employers must already know what they mean and do not need the aid or admonition of philosophers before they can understand what they are saying. ... Certainly it is often the case that expressions are not being intelligently used and to that extent their authors are just gabbling parrot-wise. But then it is obviously fruitless to ask what the expressions really mean. For there is no reason to suppose that they mean anything. It would not be mere gabbling if there was any such reason. And if the philosopher cares to ask what these expressions *would* mean *if* a rational man were using them, the only answer would be that they would mean what they would then mean. Understanding them would be enough, and that could be done by any reasonable listener. Philosophizing could not help him. ... It seems, then, that if an expression can be understood, then it is already known in that understanding what the expression means. So there is no darkness present and no illumination required or possible.¹³⁷

In the fifties, this apparent contradiction was widely discussed under the heading ‘the paradox of analysis’. If you accepted that philosophy’s task was to analyse ordinary language, then you were in a dilemma. The philosophical translation might have the same sense as the original expression; or alternatively it might not. But if it did, then the analysis would be pointless; and if it didn’t, then it would be false.¹³⁸

The paradox is indeed catastrophic for the idea that the Oxford philosophers had devised a technique for making progressively more accurate representations of what ordinary people actually mean.¹³⁹ But they carried on regardless. Despite his earlier sharpness on the matter, Ryle relapsed into presenting *The Concept of Mind* as if it were a purely descriptive attempt to ‘determine the logical geography of concepts’.¹⁴⁰ It is not

surprising that some readers thought that Ryle was treating concepts (for instance, the concept of mind) as if they were 'super-objects' – the very vice which he attributed to 'continental philosophers' as a whole. Moreover, as Stuart Hampshire pointed out when he reviewed the book in *Mind*, Ryle's description of his method was acutely puzzling. Ordinary language is stacked with phrases which treat the psyche as an inner world: you burst with emotion, keep your opinions to yourself, or reveal unexpected depths of feeling, for instance. In arguing against 'cartesian dualism', therefore, Ryle was not so much correcting a mistaken map of ordinary language, as calling for a reshaping of the linguistic terrain itself. He was protesting, as Hampshire pointed out, at 'a universal feature of ordinary language itself'. If ordinary language was his master, then Ryle had no authority to dismiss the ghost in the machine.¹⁴¹

Though Ryle was stoical, it became more and more clear that there was a deep flaw in his revolutionary programme. But Ryle's army soldiered on, if in an increasingly prickly state of self-protective irony. Ryle had long ago sniffed out a weakness for 'nursery' words in Heidegger's *Being and Time*.¹⁴² It was a surprising observation, perhaps; but in the whole matter of baby talk, Ryle and his colleagues were certainly on familiar ground. Their jokiness ensured that their special method, if they had one, would appear completely different to insiders than to earnest critics or adulators on the outside.

The Concept of Mind itself cultivates a knowing naivety of language which recalls, if not Heidegger, then at least Lewis Carroll, Edward Lear, A.A. Milne and John Betjeman. Austin employed the same artful regressiveness. You need only think of the titles of some of his most celebrated works: 'How to do things with words', 'Three Ways of Spilling Ink', 'A Plea for Excuses', 'Ifs and Cans', 'The Meaning of a Word', 'How to Talk: Some Simple Ways'. They all have a tone of making philosophy available to infants; but woe betide anyone who fails to hear in them, as well, the voice of a severe and tricky professor. It is common for

public-school boys to use babyish nicknames for their teachers, and to keep using them throughout their lives. The habit may have its charm; but when Austin responded to a remark from an earnest American student by saying 'Let's see what Witters has to say about that', he was not only demonstrating his doubts about Wittgenstein, but also derailing an outsider and putting him in his place.¹⁴³ The French hosts at Royaumont received a similar rebuff when, after they had spent a week trying to discover the secret of the Oxford revolution, Austin assured them that there was no such thing. The Oxford School had no particular conception of philosophy, except perhaps that it was all 'a pretty fair mess', he said.¹⁴⁴ As for his own special method – the revolutionary secret of the Oxford School – Austin at last agreed to sum it up and put it in a nutshell. 'What my creed boils down to, on the whole', he said, 'is excusing myself from having to do what I have no intention of doing.'¹⁴⁵ Don't ask for the meaning, as they liked to say: ask for the use.

Notes

- This is an adapted translation of an article written for a seminar on philosophy in the fifties held in Paris in March 1988. A bewilderingly truncated version was published in the proceedings (Pierre Bourdieu et al., *Les enjeux philosophiques des années 50*, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 1989), and a brief summary in the *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 10 March 1989.
1. See the chapter on 'The triumph of positive thinking' in Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1964; and Perry Anderson, 'Components of the National Culture', *New Left Review* 50, May–June 1968.
 2. Kenneth Allsop, *The Angry Decade*, Peter Owen, London, 1958, p. 150.
 3. Daniel Farson, *Daily Mail*, 13 July 1956, cited in Harry Ritchie, *Success Stories: Literature and the Media in England, 1950–1959*, Faber, London, 1988, p. 145.
 4. John Connell, *Evening News*, 26 May 1956, cited in Ritchie, *Success Stories*, p. 144.
 5. See F.W. Bateson, 'Organs of Critical Opinion IV: The *Times Literary Supplement*', *Essays in Criticism*, vol. VII, no. 4, October 1957.
 6. Ritchie, *Success Stories*, pp. 144, 145.
 7. Philip Toynbee, *Observer*, 27 May 1956, p. 13.
 8. Colin Wilson, *The Outsider*, 2nd edn, Gollancz, London, 1967 (1956); new impression, Picador, London, 1978, pp. 93, 82.
 9. See Ritchie, *Success Stories*, pp. 26–7.
 10. See Robert Hewison, *In Anger, Culture in the Cold War 1945–60*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1981, ch. 2.
 11. T.S. Eliot, *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*, Faber & Faber, London, 1948, p. 108.
 12. Leslie Fiedler, 'The Un-angry young men', *Encounter* 52, January 1958, pp. 3–12.
 13. See Francis Mulhern, *The Moment of 'Scrutiny'*, New Left Books, London, 1979.
 14. Allsop, *The Angry Decade*, p. 10.
 15. Evelyn Waugh, 'An Open Letter on a Very Serious Subject', *Encounter* 27, December 1955, pp. 11–16.

16. See, for example, Guido de Ruggiero, *Existentialism*, Secker & Warburg, London, 1946; Jean Wahl, *A Short History of Existentialism*, Philosophical Library, New York, 1949; Herbert Read, *Existentialism, Marxism and Anarchism*, Freedom Press, London, 1949; H.J. Blackham, *Six Existentialist Thinkers*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1952.
17. Sartre, *The Transcendence of the Ego* (1936), 1937; *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions* (1938), 1948; *The Psychology of Imagination (L'imaginaire)* (1940), 1956; *Being and Nothingness* (1943), 1956; *Existentialism and Humanism* (1947), 1948; *What Is Literature?* (1947), 1949. Weil, *The Need for Roots* (1949), 1952. Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942), 1955; *The Rebel (L'homme révolté)* (1951), 1953. De Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (1947), 1948; *The Second Sex* (1949), 1953.
18. Iris Murdoch, 'The Novelist as Metaphysician', *The Listener*, 16 March 1950, pp. 473–6. Cf. Alistair Davies and Peter Saunders, 'Literature, Politics and Society', in Alan Sinfield, ed., *Society and Literature 1945–1970*, Methuen, London, 1983.
19. Philip Toynbee, *Observer*, 27 May 1956, p. 13.
20. David Wainwright, *Evening News*, 26 May 1956, cited in Ritchie, *Success Stories*, p. 181.
21. Allsop, *The Angry Decade*, pp. 200, 179.
22. Wilson, *The Outsider*, p. 293; and 'Postscript' (1967), p. 309.
23. See Ritchie, *Success Stories*, p. 172.
24. The phrases come from Kenneth Allsop (*Daily Mail*, 26 February 1957), Keith Waterhouse (*Tribune*, 1 November 1957), and Peter Green ('Child's Guide to the AYMs', *Time and Tide*, 2 November 1957); cited in Ritchie, *Success Stories*, pp. 172, 157.
25. See Jonathan Rée, *Proletarian Philosophers*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1984.
26. Viscount Samuel, *Memoirs*, Cresset Press, London, 1945, pp. 248–9; see also the letter from Viscount Samuel, W.D. Ross and Lord Lindsay of Birker, *Mind*, vol. LV, no. 219, July 1946, p. 287.
27. On the earlier history of university philosophy, see Jonathan Rée, 'Philosophy as an Academic Discipline: The Changing Place of Philosophy in an Arts Education', *Studies in Higher Education*, vol. 3, no. 1, 1978, pp. 5–23.
28. See Donald MacKinnon, 'The Teaching of Philosophy in the United Kingdom', in Georges Canguilhem, ed., *The Teaching of Philosophy: An International Inquiry*, UNESCO, Paris, 1953, p. 127. Numbers increased steadily with the elevation of several colleges to university status: Southampton (1952), Hull (1954), Exeter (1955) and Leicester (1957).
29. See H.H. Price, 'The Study of Philosophy at Oxford', in Canguilhem, ed., *The Teaching of Philosophy*, pp. 128–9.
30. See C.D. Broad, 'Notes on the Teaching of Philosophy at Cambridge', in Canguilhem, ed., *The Teaching of Philosophy*, pp. 130–32; see also the reports on London and the civic universities, pp. 134, 135.
31. 'Before the war it was rare for aspiring philosophers to work for doctorates. If they had made their mark as undergraduates, and had done reasonably well in their examinations for a bachelor's degree, they were directly appointed to lectureships or even fellowships in an Oxford college, or at the worst to a post in some red-brick university from which they might hope eventually to transfer to an Oxford or Cambridge fellowship.' A.J. Ayer, *More of My Life*, Collins, London, 1984, p. 180.
32. A.J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic*, 2nd edn, Gollancz, London, 1936, 1946, pp. 33, 153.
33. H.J. Paton, 'Fifty Years of Philosophy', in H.D. Lewis, ed., *Contemporary British Philosophy: Personal Statements*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1956, p. 346.
34. Bertrand Russell, *Sceptical Essays*, Allen & Unwin, London, 1928, p. 11; see also A.J. Ayer, *Part of My Life*, Collins, London, 1977, pp. 53–4.
35. A.J. Ayer, *Encounter* 36, September 1956, pp. 75–7; *More of My Life*, p. 124. One of the other negative reviews of *The Outsider* was by Raymond Williams in *Essays in Criticism*, vol. VII, no. 4, October 1957.
36. See Walter Allen's review of *Lucky Jim*, *New Statesman*, 30 January 1955; cf. Ritchie, *Success Stories*, p. 68.
37. Anon., *Times Literary Supplement*, 13 December 1957, p. 757.
38. See Ayer, *Part of My Life*, pp. 301–2.
39. Colin Wilson, 'Postscript' (1967) to *The Outsider*, p. 300.
40. Gilbert Ryle, review of *Sein und Zeit*, *Mind*, vol. XXXVIII, no. 151, July 1929, pp. 355–70, reprinted in Michael Murray, ed., *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy*, Yale University Press, New Haven CT,

- 1978, pp. 53–64. See also Gilbert Ryle, 'Phenomenology', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary Volume IX, 1932, pp. 68–83.
41. Gilbert Ryle, 'Autobiographical', in Oscar P. Wood and George Pitcher, eds, *Ryle*, Macmillan, London, 1971, pp. 8–9; Ayer, *Part of My Life*, p. 121.
42. Ryle's army included – apart from himself (1900–1976) – Elizabeth Anscombe (1919–2001), J.L. Austin (1911–1960), Isaiah Berlin (1909–1997), Michael Dummett (1925–2011), A.G.N. Flew (1923–2010), Philippa Foot (née Bosanquet) (1920–2010), Stuart Hampshire (1914–2004), R.M. Hare (1919–2002), H.L.A. Hart (1907–1992), Iris Murdoch (1919–1999), P.H. Nowell-Smith (1914–2006), David Pears (1921–2009), Anthony Quinton (1925–2010), P.F. Strawson (1919–2006), Stephen Toulmin (1922–2009), J.O. Urmson (1915–2012), G.J. Warnock (1923–1995), Mary Warnock (née Wilson) (1925–2019) and Bernard Williams (1929–2003).
43. Anon. (in fact P.F. Strawson – see Ved Mehta, *The Fly and the Fly-bottle: Encounters with British Intellectuals*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1963, p. 58); 'The Post-Lingustic Thaw', *Times Literary Supplement*, 9 September 1960, p. ix.
44. The young man was Richard Robinson; the incident is recorded in Paton, 'Fifty Years of Philosophy', p. 351.
45. Anon., 'The Post-Lingustic Thaw', p. ix.
46. J.L. Austin, 'Ifs and Cans' (1956), in *Philosophical Papers*, ed. J.O. Urmson and G.J. Warnock, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1961, p. 152.
47. Mehta, *The Fly and the Fly-bottle*, pp. 51–2.
48. G.J. Warnock, interviewed in Mehta, *The Fly and the Fly-bottle*, pp. 53–4.
49. R.M. Hare, interviewed in Mehta, *The Fly and the Fly-bottle*, p. 46.
50. R.M. Hare, review of Lepley, ed., *Value, a Co-operative Inquiry*, *Mind*, vol. LX, no. 239, July 1951, pp. 430–32.
51. Opposition to 'the ubiquitous romantic reaction' was part of the programme of the review *Polemic*, which appeared in eight issues from 1945 to 1947. It was edited by Humphrey Slater, and contributors included A.J. Ayer, Geoffrey Grigson, Ben Nicholson, George Orwell, Karl Popper, Bertrand Russell, Adrian Stokes and Edgar Wind.
52. Anon. (in fact J.L. Austin), review of *the Concept of Mind*, *Times Literary Supplement*, 7 April 1950, p. xi; Stuart Hampshire, review of *The Concept of Mind*, *Mind*, vol. LIX, no. 234, April 1950, p. 255. Both these reviews are reprinted in Wood and Pitcher, eds, *Ryle*.
53. Iris Murdoch, 'Metaphysics and Ethics', in D.F. Pears, ed., *The Nature of Metaphysics*, Macmillan, London, 1957, p. 105.
54. See Michael Frayn, 'Festival', in Michael Sissons and Philip France, eds, *The Age of Austerity*, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1963, pp. 319–38.
55. Oxonian (in fact C.E.M. Joad), 'A Visit to Oxford', *New Statesman*, 26 June 1948, pp. 518–19; A.J. Ayer, *New Statesman*, 10 July 1948, p. 30; C.E.M. Joad, *New Statesman*, 31 July 1948, p. 91.
56. C.E.M. Joad, *A Critique of Logical Positivism*, Gollancz, London, 1950, p. 145; see also the review by R.J. Spilsbury, *Mind*, vol. LX, no. 238, April 1951, p. 276.
57. Joad, *A Critique of Logical Positivism*, p. 16. See also Anon. (Joad?), 'The Philosophy of 1951', *Times Literary Supplement*, 24 August 1951, p. x.
58. G.J. Warnock, 'Analysis and Imagination', in Gilbert Ryle, ed., *The Revolution in Philosophy*, Macmillan, London, 1956, p. 124.
59. A.J. Ayer, 'The Vienna Circle', in Ryle, ed., *The Revolution in Philosophy*, p. 73.
60. Ayer, *More of My Life*, p. 162.
61. G.J. Warnock, 'Saturday Mornings', in Isaiah Berlin et al., *Essays on J.L. Austin*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1973, pp. 36–7, 39.
62. P.F. Strawson, 'On Referring', *Mind*, vol. LIX, no. 235, July 1950, p. 344.
63. G.J. Warnock, 'Metaphysics in Logic', in A.G.N. Flew, ed., *Essays in Conceptual Analysis*, Macmillan, London, 1956, p. 76.
64. Murdoch, 'Metaphysics and Ethics', p. 120.
65. Bertrand Russell, 'The Relation of Sense-data to Physics' (1914), in *Mysticism and Logic*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1953 (1918), p. 148.
66. Bertrand Russell, 'Logic and Ontology' and 'Philosophical Analysis', in *My Philosophical Development*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1959, pp. 231, 230.
67. Bertrand Russell, interviewed in Mehta, *The Fly and the Fly-bottle*, p. 41.
68. Bertrand Russell, 'What is Mind?', in *My Philosophical Development*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1959, p. 250.
69. J.L. Austin, 'A Plea for Excuses' (1956), in *Philosophical Papers*, pp. 129–37.
70. R.M. Hare, 'A School for Philosophers', *Ratio*, vol. II, no. 2, February 1960, p. 115.

71. Ibid., p. 109.
72. See Andrew Large, *The Artificial Language Movement*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1985, pp. 162–73.
73. Ryle, 'Autobiographical', p. 15.
74. Isaiah Berlin, 'Austin and the Early Beginnings of Oxford Philosophy', in Berlin et al., *Essays on J.L. Austin*, p. 1.
75. Ryle, 'Autobiographical', p. 15.
76. Hare, 'A School for Philosophers', pp. 113–14.
77. See Ryle's introduction to Gilbert Ryle et al., *The Revolution in Philosophy*, Macmillan, London, 1956, pp. 1–4.
78. Gilbert Ryle in Pears, ed., *The Nature of Metaphysics*, p. 150.
79. P.F. Strawson, 'On Referring', *Mind*, vol. LIX, no. 235, July 1950, p. 335.
80. R.M. Hare, review of Stephen Toulmin, 'An Examination of the Place of Reason in Ethics', *Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. I, no. 4, July 1951, pp. 372–5.
81. The remark is reported with some dismay in Paton, 'Fifty Years of Philosophy', p. 351.
82. Strawson, 'The Post-Linguistic Thaw', p. ix.
83. Stuart Hampshire, review of *The Concept of Mind*, *Mind*, vol. LIX, no. 234, April 1950, p. 238, reprinted in Wood and Pitcher, Ryle, p. 18.
84. Frege (1848–1925) was hardly mentioned in Urmson's *Philosophical Analysis* (1956), but acknowledgement grew as a result of the efforts of Michael Dummett, for instance in his article on Frege in *The Concise Encyclopedia of Western Philosophy and Philosophers*, ed. J.O. Urmson, Hutchinson, London, 1960. See also Antony Flew, ed., *Logic and Language*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1951, p. 10 n1.
85. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung* (1918), translated into English by C.K. Ogden, the inventor of Basic English, under the unfortunate title – suggested by G.E. Moore – of *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Routledge, London, 1922.
86. See D.F. Pears, 'Logical Atomism', in Ryle et al., *The Revolution in Philosophy*.
87. See J.O. Urmson, *Philosophical Analysis: Its Development between the Two World Wars*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1956.
88. Stephen Toulmin, review of Rudolph Carnap, *Logical Foundations of Probability*, *Mind*, vol. LXII, no. 245, January 1953, p. 99.
89. G.E. Moore (1873–1958) explained some of this programme in his essay 'A Defence of Common Sense' (1923), reprinted in the posthumous *Philosophical Papers*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1959.
90. Murdoch, 'Metaphysics and Ethics', p. 100.
91. G.A. Paul, 'G.E. Moore: Analysis, Common Usage, and Common Sense', in Ryle et al., *The Revolution in Philosophy*, pp. 67, 69; on Moore's 'famous taciturnity', see Quentin Bell, *Virginia Woolf*, vol. II, Hogarth, London, 1972, p. 215.
92. Ayer, *Part of My Life*, 1977, p. 150. Ayer refers here to G.E. Moore; the same comparison with the little boy is to be found, for example, in C.D. Broad, 'The Local Background of Contemporary Cambridge Philosophy', in C.A. Mace, ed., *British Philosophy in the Mid-Century: A Cambridge Symposium*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1957, p. 51.
93. Flew, ed., *Logic and Language*, p. 10.
94. They were eventually published as Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1958.
95. Ibid., p. 18.
96. See Urmson, *Philosophical Analysis*, pp. 169–82.
97. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, Macmillan, London, 1953, p. 109.
98. P.F. Strawson, review of *Philosophical Investigations*, *Mind*, vol. LXIII, no. 249, January 1954, pp. 78, 99.
99. Russell, *My Philosophical Development*, p. 214.
100. Ryle, 'Autobiographical', p. 11.
101. G.J. Warnock, interviewed in Mehta, *The Fly and the Fly-bottle*, p. 55.
102. D.F. Pears, 'Logical Atomism', in *The Revolution in Philosophy*, pp. 54–5.
103. A.J. Ayer and Raymond Winch, eds, *British Empirical Philosophers*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1952.
104. Murdoch, 'Metaphysics and Ethics', p. 99.
105. In Ireland, apart from the work of the Protestant Trinity College Dublin, Catholic priests maintained an unbroken tradition of scholasticism, though it had no academic base until the foundation of Queen's University in Belfast in 1845. In Wales, the colleges which formed the University of Wales at the end of the nineteenth century required a philosophical training in nearly all their arts students. In 1952, there was even a philosophical journal in Welsh. (See H.D. Lewis, 'The Position

- of Philosophy in the University of Wales', in Canguilhem, ed., *The Teaching of Philosophy*, pp. 137–40.) And in the three ancient universities of Scotland, there was a continuous tradition of compulsory moral philosophy. The English versions of many philosophical classics were due to Scots translators. *Mind* itself began as a Scottish journal, and its first issue said that there were as yet no professional philosophers south of the border. By 1900, however, Scots began to feel they were being taken over by the English. (See Norman Kemp Smith, 'The Scots Philosophical Club', *Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. I, no. 1, October 1950, pp. 1–4.)
106. R.M. Hare, interviewed in Mehta, *The Fly and the Fly-bottle*, p. 47.
 107. T.D. Weldon, review of Hermann Wein, *Das Problem des Relativismus*, *Mind*, vol. LX, no. 240, October 1951, p. 567.
 108. C.A. Mace, review of P.J.R. Dempsey, *The Psychology of Sartre*, *Mind*, vol. LXI, no. 243, July 1952, pp. 425–7.
 109. Isaiah Berlin, review of Benedetto Croce, *My Philosophy*, *Mind*, vol. LXI, no. 244, October 1952, pp. 574–5.
 110. P.F. Strawson, review of Maxime Chastaing, *La philosophie de Virginia Woolf*, *Mind*, vol. LXIII, no. 252, October 1954, pp. 574–5.
 111. Ayer, *Part of My Life*, pp. 284–5, 299.
 112. Ayer, *More of My Life*, pp. 28–9; see also 'Reflections on Existentialism' (1966), in A.J. Ayer, *Metaphysics and Common Sense*, Macmillan, London, 1969, pp. 203–18.
 113. *More of My Life*, pp. 26–7. Perhaps the reference was to the discussion of the emptiness of a jug in Heidegger's essay 'The Thing' (1950), trans. Albert Hofstadter, in Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, Harper & Row, New York, 1971.
 114. Hare, 'A School for Philosophers', pp. 114–15.
 115. The date of 1958 is given in Ernest Gellner, *Words and Things* (1959), Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1968, p. 242 n1, which rules out 1960, which has been given elsewhere.
 116. Leslie Beck, Jean Wahl, et al., *La philosophie analytique, Cahiers de Royaumont*, Philosophie, IV, Minuit, Paris, 1962, p. 230.
 117. Gilbert Ryle, 'La phenomenologie contre *The Concept of Mind*', in *ibid.*, pp. 67–8. The text quoted here is the English original, published in his *Philosophical Papers*, London, Hutchinson, 1971, pp. 180–82.
 118. Beck, Wahl, et al., *La philosophie analytique*, pp. 85–7.
 119. *Ibid.*, pp. 87, 375, 344.
 120. *Ibid.*, pp. 93–4, 99. A translation of this exchange is available in Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Texts and Dialogues*, ed. Hugh J. Silverman and James Barry, Humanities Press, Atlantic Highlands NJ, 1992, pp. 65–6, 71.
 121. Karl Popper (1902) went to the LSE in 1947, having spent ten years in New Zealand after leaving his native Austria. His *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (1945) was well received (see, for example, Ryle's review in *Mind*, vol. LVI, no. 222, April 1947, pp. 167–72), but he was isolated as a result of his implacable hostility to 'Wittgenstein and his school' with their belief that 'genuine philosophical problems do not exist'. (Karl Popper, 'Philosophy of Science: A Personal Report', in Mace, ed., *British Philosophy in the Mid-Century*, p. 183, reprinted in Popper's *Conjectures and Refutations*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1963, p. 44.) Popper remained truculent: 'I claim that there are philosophical problems; and even that I have solved them.' (*Unended Quest: An Intellectual Autobiography*, Collins Fontana, London, 1976, p. 124.)
 122. *The Times*, 5 November 1959, p. 13.
 123. Ernest Gellner (1925–1995), interviewed in Mehta, *The Fly and the Fly-bottle*, p. 36.
 124. Ernest Gellner, *Words and Things*, with an introduction by Bertrand Russell, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1968, pp. 288–9, 176, 257, 249, 264–5, 272–3.
 125. Elizabeth Anscombe, Sydenham High and St Hugh's; J.L. Austin, Shrewsbury and Balliol; Isaiah Berlin, St Paul's and Corpus; Michael Dummett, Winchester and Christ Church; A.G.N. Flew, Kingswood and St John's; Philippa Foot, privately and Somerville; Stuart Hampshire, Repton and Balliol; R.M. Hare, Rugby and Balliol; H.L.A. Hart, Cheltenham College, Bradford Grammar School, and New; Iris Murdoch, Badminton and Somerville; P.H. Nowell-Smith, Winchester and New; David Pears, Westminster and Balliol; Anthony Quinton, Stowe and Christ Church; Gilbert Ryle, Brighton College and Queen's; P.F. Strawson, Christ's College Finchley and St John's; Stephen Toulmin, Oundle and King's, Cambridge; J.O. Urmson, Kingswood

- and Corpus; G.J. Warnock, Winchester and New; Mary Warnock, St Swithun's Winchester and Lady Margaret Hall; Bernard Williams, Chigwell and Balliol.
126. Bertrand Russell, interviewed in Mehta, *The Fly and the Fly-bottle*, p. 40.
 127. 'Perhaps this explains why I find London much more exciting than Oxford', A.J. Ayer, interviewed in Mehta, *The Fly and the Fly-bottle*, p. 69.
 128. Of the 340 philosophy books, mostly in English but some in foreign languages, which were reviewed in the *TLS* in the fifties, 20 (less than 6 per cent) were Oxfordian; 46 (14 per cent) were analytic in the old style of Russell; 83 (24 per cent) were idealist; and no less than 79 (23 per cent) were 'continental', mostly existentialist. The remaining 112 (33 per cent) do not fit any of these categories.
 129. Anon. (in fact J.L. Austin), review of *The Concept of Mind*, *Times Literary Supplement*, 7 April 1950, reprinted in Wood and Pitcher, eds, *Ryle*, pp. 45–51.
 130. John Wisdom (1904–1993), who taught at Cambridge, had been a colleague of Wittgenstein, but was never suspected of being a 'disciple'. He was an adherent of the Basic English movement (see his *Interpretation and Analysis in Relation to Bentham's Theory of Definition, Psyche Miniatures*, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, London, 1931). His paper 'Philosophical Perplexity' (*Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* XXXVII, 1936–7, reprinted in his *Philosophy and Psycho-Analysis*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1953) was for many years taken to be the closest statement of Wittgenstein's later, unpublished doctrines, and is described by Urmson as 'the first manifesto of a new way of doing philosophy' (*Philosophical Analysis*, p. 178).
 131. 'The Philosophy of 1951', *Times Literary Supplement*, 24 August 1951, p. x.
 132. C.D. Broad, review of H.H. Price, *Thinking and Experience*, *Mind*, vol. LXIII, no. 251, July 1954, p. 403.
 133. Anon., review of Antony Flew, ed., *Essays in Conceptual Analysis*, *Times Literary Supplement*, 8 March 1957, p. 149.
 134. G.J. Warnock, foreword to Berlin et al., *Essays on J.L. Austin*, p. v.
 135. See, for example, Friedrich Waismann, *The Principles of Linguistic Philosophy*, ed. Rom Harré, Macmillan, London, 1965.
 136. See, for example, John Searle, *Speech Acts*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1969; Stephen C. Levinson, *Pragmatics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1983; Jürgen Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action* (1981), 2 vols, trans. Thomas McCarthy, Beacon Press, Boston MA, 1984.
 137. Gilbert Ryle, 'Systematically Misleading Expressions', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* XXXII, 1931–2, reprinted in Flew, ed., *Logic and Language*, pp. 11–12.
 138. C.H. Langford, 'The Notion of Analysis in Moore's Philosophy', in P.A. Schilpp, ed., *The Philosophy of G.E. Moore*, Open Court, La Salle IL, p. 323.
 139. The criticism was made very cogently by W.V.O. Quine, particularly in his 'Mr Strawson on Logical Theory', *Mind*, vol. LXII, no. 248, October 1953, reprinted in *The Ways of Paradox*, Random House, New York, 1966.
 140. Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, Hutchinson, London, 1949, p. 10.
 141. Stuart Hampshire, review of *The Concept of Mind*, *Mind*, vol. LIX, no. 234, April 1950, pp. 239–41, reprinted in Wood and Pitcher, eds, *Ryle*, pp. 20–23.
 142. Gilbert Ryle, review of *Sein und Zeit*, *Mind*, vol. XXXVIII, no. 151, July 1929, p. 364; reprinted in Murray, ed., *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy*, p. 57.
 143. George Pitcher, 'Austin: A Personal Memoir', in Berlin et al., *Essays on J.L. Austin*, p. 24.
 144. J.L. Austin in Beck, Wahl, et al., *La philosophie analytique*, p. 292.
 145. 'Mon credo se ramène en gros à m'excuser de ne pas faire ce qu'il n'entre nullement en mon propos de faire', in Beck, Wahl, et al., *La philosophie analytique*, p. 375. 11

10 The erotics of deference

PETER OSBORNE

In 1971 Bryan Magee published a book of conversations with British philosophers under the title *Modern British Philosophy*. Originating in a series of radio broadcasts and appearing under the imprint of Secker & Warburg, it was intended as a 'lively introduction' to the philosophy of the day. The list of contributors included most of the surviving leading figures of the post-war years – Ayer, Hampshire, MacIntyre, Pears, Popper, Quinton, Ryle, (Ninian) Smart, Strawson, (Geoffrey) Warnock, Williams, Wollheim – along with someone who, already at that time, appeared as something of an exception: Alan Montefiore. The larger part of the conversations was dominated by discussions of the thought of the – then still only recently dead – 'masters' of 'the age of Russell': Russell himself, Moore, Wittgenstein and Austin. These were followed by topic-based dialogues on morals, religion, art and social theory. Logic, philosophy of science, philosophy of language and philosophy of mind – the core of the discipline then, as still, albeit to a lesser extent, now – having already been covered in the extensive treatment of the legacies of the masters. The aberrant character of Montefiore's interest in French philosophy was at once registered and concealed by the titling of his contribution as simply 'Conclusion'. (When asked if what was happening in England seems 'to even sympathetic outside observers to be mistaken', he replies gently: 'Well, not so much mistaken as perhaps superficial and pointless.')

But if Montefiore stood out for his eccentric preoccupation with foreign thinkers (marked down as literary, politicized, grouped into ‘violently competing movements’, and prey to the whims of fashion), he was nonetheless otherwise very much at one with the rest of the group. The cultural homogeneity of the collection is profound. All are men of a certain age (no Anscombe, no Murdoch, no Mary Warnock); nearly all cite their service in World War II, or immediately after, in the Notes on Contributors; and eleven of the thirteen (along with Magee, their interlocutor) were educated at Oxford, five at Balliol College. MacIntyre and Popper are the only exceptions. Yet in his Preface, Magee not only insisted that there was ‘no prevailing orthodoxy’ (‘the orthodoxies of language analysis’ having, supposedly, been replaced by ‘a welter of reappraisal and experiment’) but also maintained that there was ‘an unprecedented openness to influences from outside’. Precedent, of course, is relative to what has gone before; something of which may be gauged from Magee’s remark that ‘parochialism is an unimportant fault when the most important events happen in one’s parish’. Others might think that parochialism is the belief that the most important events happen in one’s parish. Still, it is the perception that matters here, and the perception was (or at least, the perception was being fostered) that the philosophical wind of change was blowing.

It is blowing again – or perhaps it’s the same wind still blowing, one last breath – if *New British Philosophy* is to be believed.¹ There is, apparently, a ‘new spirit of philosophy’, embodied in a new generation of philosophers in Britain, located in a new ‘cultural milieu’. And *New British Philosophy* is out to ‘capture’ and ‘showcase’ its ‘mood’. It comprises sixteen interviews with those its editors describe as ‘the heirs to the subject’s aristocracy’. What has supposedly changed since the days of *Modern British Philosophy* is that there is no longer a hegemony of the ‘golden triangle’ of Oxford, Cambridge and London (what’s this about Cambridge and London?); nor is there a set philosophical agenda (although Magee was already denying that

there was one back in 1971): 'Continental, post-analytic, feminist, inter-disciplinary and applied philosophy all thrive where previously they were confined to the margins.' Now there are 'regional centres' where 'different styles of philosophy flourish'. And the heirs to the aristocrats are no longer aristocrats themselves, but 'star players'. The editors are modest in the disclaimer that they have not assembled 'a definitive premier league of philosophers', but they do reckon they at least have 'the few undoubted' (and teasingly unnamed) stars. It is all very Carnaby Street, this imagined Blairite cultural revolution of *BritPhil* (at one point touted as the title for the collection). But there is some truth in it. Quite how little becomes apparent in the interviews themselves.

The list of contributors to *New British Philosophy* is more like the famous list of animals in Borges's 'certain Chinese encyclopedia' than was its predecessor. For that one should be grateful. But it is not very like it, or without some rather obvious exclusions. The geographical spread of teaching locations is certainly wider than Magee's (Oxford and London provide a mere 50 per cent of contributors), but there is no one from the 'new' universities. And while the presence of three women means that female philosophers across the whole of Britain have as many representatives as the Philosophy Department at UCL, one might be forgiven for having hoped that the editors would have tried a little harder here. It places a heavy burden on the chosen three. Especially since one of them, Christina Howells, is the only interviewee not teaching in a philosophy department, thereby perpetuating that ideological connection between women and literary method that places them closer to 'foreigners' than to their male peers in the imaginary of British philosophy – for which they can, I suppose, be grateful. Still, what a chapter expounding Sartre's existentialism of the 1940s is doing representing 'new British philosophy' is not immediately clear.

The most striking features of the conversations are, first, the extent to which so many of them (particularly in the first half of the book) continue to exhibit that narrowness of intellectual and

cultural reference which was characteristic of anglophone philosophy in the latter half of the twentieth century; and, second, the way in which, when the canvas is broadened, the editors police the discussion by repeatedly bringing it back to the issue of the credibility, or not, of the idea of an 'analytical/continental' divide. It is amazing (to me, at least) how many of the contributors conceive of their intellectual work (and their lives?) as a kind of extended continuation of their undergraduate experiences. And it is on occasion shocking how close the radical openness of what is often thought to be a philosophical attitude comes to a naivety sustained only by systematic ignorance of (or simple lack of interest in) other domains of knowledge.

In the first part of the book, for example (up to and including chapter 10, after which there is a distinct change of tone and topics, although this is not registered in the book's organization), the two conversations relating to feminism stand out, as instances in which philosophical argument comes alive by being brought to bear on issues of contemporary social importance. However, they take place in isolation from the broader history of feminist theory and debate in a way that makes feminist philosophy appear, at times, self-defeatingly encased within a disciplinary prison. Miranda Fricker seems thrown by a question about what 'first wave feminism' was (the struggles for women's suffrage) – referring instead to Simone de Beauvoir and Mary Wollstonecraft, as if the history of feminism was primarily a history of philosophical texts. Rae Langton presents the main developments of her work on pornography – contra Ronald Dworkin's liberalism, and in solidarity with Catharine MacKinnon – without reference to any of the arguments of the feminist anti-censorship movement, which, one might have thought, was a more relevant point of contestation than that particular Dworkin.

MacKinnon's callow assumption that pornography is, by definition, about heterosexual sex (while representations of gay sex can simply be reclassified as 'erotica') passes unexamined. Langton acknowledges that the consequences of

the MacKinnon-sponsored legislation in Canada (prosecution of feminist documentaries and gay pornography) were 'the last thing MacKinnon intended', but she thinks it irrelevant to the 'very significant achievement' of the work that justified it. The lack of interest in the apparent contradiction (or, at best, the unexplained argumentative gap) seems deeply unphilosophical. Yet Langton defends it on the precise grounds of the distinctively philosophical character of her concerns. 'Philosophy' thus remains here the name for a disciplinary activity insulated from the broader forms and context of argument that alone make 'feminist philosophy' a politically relevant concern.

A different and more acute instance of the self-negating function of a certain academicism occurs in the interview with Jonathan Wolff on 'The Role of Political Philosophy'. He declares himself 'very much against the kind of lining up of oppositions that we sometimes see, particularly in political philosophy – putting some people in one camp and others in another and trying to decide which is right'. Instead, he prefers 'not to pick a firm line and to argue it against other people'. But why, then, does he do political philosophy? What exactly does he think politics is? The interviewers do not enquire.

The first and the final six chapters of the book range freely, in different ways, across topics and metaphilosophical approaches, respectively. It is in the central four chapters, however, that the residual analytical mainstream – of whom the editors are somewhat in awe – get their say. In successive chapters on philosophy of mind (Tim Crane), analytical philosophy (Michael Martin, editor of *Mind*), logic (Timothy Williamson), and what one might call analytical metaphysics (Robin Le Poidevin), the establishment set out their stall. The interviewers argue gamely here, but they never challenge the terms of the approaches or point to connections with alternative traditions (such as Tim Crane's apparently belated discovery of the rudiments of phenomenology, for example). Rather, deference and at times (and not unrelatedly) the erotics of argument are the order of the day.

This is particularly clear in the interview with Martin, whom the editors call 'the real McCoy'. 'I want to focus on some of your work and perhaps we can see how real philosophy operates', Baggini (and/or Stangroom?) breathlessly declares, momentarily dropping the strategic front of philosophical pluralism. Martin is kind to his admirers. As befits the Wykeham Professor of Logic at Oxford, Williamson is more severe. He has a problem to deal with, through which he can demonstrate 'those advances in philosophical standards that have been made within analytical philosophy', and it concerns the use of words like 'tall' and 'thin'. There is nothing personal here, you must understand; the lesson is a general one. For 'there would be a serious loss of integrity involved in abandoning [these standards] in the way that would be required to participate in continental philosophy.' (The interviewer lets him get away with this unremarked.) The problem is that these concepts 'appear to be *vague* with respect to borderline cases'. And the Sorites paradox of incremental depletion appears to make such vagueness ineliminable. Williamson's mission (and he has accepted it) is to eliminate such vagueness without resort to the continuum of degrees of truth involved in 'fuzzy logic'.

His solution is simple (perhaps too simple): the vagueness is not in the concept, with respect to borderline cases, but only in the application. Standard conceptions of truth and falsity are in principle applicable, and hence give meaning to the terms in these instances, but we cannot tell which of them is actually appropriate in such cases. So 'vagueness is a certain kind of inescapable ignorance'. How satisfied you are with this 'solution' will probably depend upon broader issues about 'inescapable ignorance' that are not broached in the interview. Williamson is himself an interesting (if definitely non-borderline) case, because he attributes his fondness for formal logic to the fact it is something he can do 'without too much difficulty', yet which he nonetheless finds 'deeply satisfying'. There is a clue here to the deep-seated complacency and aggressive rejectionism of the analytical establishment: being so intellectually satisfied

by something one finds so easy, one might well get annoyed if someone tried to take it away.

The hoary old idea that the 'continental tradition' is not interested in 'conceptual analysis, concentration on argument, the detection of inconsistency' is given one final unimpeded airing by Le Poidevin. And then the deluge begins.

Simon Critchley leads the continentalist charge. However, those familiar with his writings may be, momentarily, as disorientated by his tactics as his analytical enemies. For, giving in to the temptations of the occasion, he has turned up wearing someone else's clothes. 'In my view', he asserts, 'the basic conceptual map of the continental tradition can be summarized in three terms: *critique*, *praxis* and *emancipation*. ... The goal of philosophy in the continental tradition is emancipation, whether individual or social.' Heady stuff. But does he really believe it, and furthermore, is it true? Is this really 'the goal of philosophy' in the phenomenological tradition: in Husserl, Heidegger and Levinas, for example; or even for Derrida? The fact that Derrida has taken 'political positions on pedagogical reform in France and [supported] a wide variety of causes', as Critchley puts it, seems something of a non sequitur, without a connection being made to what is most distinctive about his philosophical work. Critchley's Frankfurtean turn is a welcome one, but it is not immediately clear that the rest of twentieth-century European philosophy can so easily retrospectively follow him. In any case, by the end of the interview he has changed back into his own clothes: 'What I want to argue for ... is a version of continental philosophy that does not embrace a "one big thing".' (There goes 'emancipation'.) 'There is no one big thing, just many small things, fascinating small things, which it is the job of phenomenology to describe.' It was just a dream, a wonderful dream.

Simon Glendinning takes on the main metaphilosophical issue underlying the volume's 'new diversity' thesis: the claim for the lack of philosophical significance of the analytical/continental divide. On this view, continental philosophy is *wholly*

the projection of a self-styled analytical philosophy: the 'false personification' of the permanent possibility of sophistry. It is thus not so much that the divide is of decreasing significance, as that it never actually existed at all: 'crudely speaking, there is no continental philosophy'. The task is not reconciliation (with or without a Truth Commission), but Wittgensteinian-style therapy for the analytics. This is a strong and seductive thesis, but it has more dialectical subtlety than one might care for. For after the therapy, there will only be one tradition left: a less narrow-minded analytical one.

Stephen Mulhall talks about his version of 'Post-Analytic Philosophy'. Keith Ansell-Pearson gives a spirited exposition of his particular brand of left Nietzscheanism (now, *there* is a 'new spirit of philosophy' for the editors). But the collection gives itself away again at the close with Nigel Warburton on 'Philosophy and the Public'. It is in its conception of the public that analytical philosophy, or British philosophy more generally, reveals the full depth of the gulf that still separates them from other European traditions. To put it crudely, to communicate publicly French and German philosophers, for example, make interventions on cultural and political matters of the day, on the basis of a conception of public reason, informed by their philosophical positions; those from the British philosophical establishment write 'primers' about philosophy conceived as an academic discipline.

Warburton is brimming with *ressentiment* against those who do not consider the production of 'made simple' books to be the highest intellectual calling. Ostensibly against the stultifying pedantry and scholastic obscurity of the culture of analytical journals, for turning academia into a 'business', he sees no connection between this and his own relentless marketing of compilations of the briefest of lecture notes as books. Yet when asked if writing 'popular philosophy' is a rewarding enough activity, he interprets the question financially, laboriously pointing out that 'it increases your income, and also your ability to command better royalties and advances on subsequent books'. It would be

nice to be able to take this in a Brechtian spirit, but it is not easy. Furthermore, this is a type of popularization in which what is to be communicated remains almost wholly unaffected by the exchange. It is one-way traffic.

The same informational conception of philosophical communication underlies the project of *The Philosopher's Magazine*, which Baggini and Stangroom edit. At the end of the day, their 'new British philosophy' is largely a certain disavowed position-taking within this cultural milieu. As for the much trumpeted new diversity within the discipline, with some notable exceptions, it has hardly begun to take on board the thought of the figures singled out by Montefiore over thirty years ago.

Note

1. Julian Baggini and Jeremy Stangroom, eds, *New British Philosophy: The Interviews*, Routledge, London and New York, 2002.

11 Philosophy in Germany

SIMON CRITCHLEY & AXEL HONNETH

SC Simply as a way of initially organizing our discussion, we both agreed to read a short article by Dieter Henrich that appeared in *Merkur* in his philosophy column, 'Eine Generation im Abgang' ('A Passing Generation').¹ Henrich rightly claims that a change of generations is coming to an end in German philosophy, which is most clearly marked by the retirement of Jürgen Habermas in 1994 and the death of Hans Blumenberg in 1996. But we might also speak of a wider generational change that would include Karl-Otto Apel, Ernst Tugendhat, Michael Theunissen and Niklas Luhmann, as well as figures like Otto Poeggeler and Robert Spaemann. Almost all of this generation are now retired, and it is at the moment unclear who and what will take their place.

As Henrich explains, the oldest and the youngest of this generation are only separated by about fifteen years, and most of them came out of three philosophical schools – Bonn, Münster and Heidelberg. Gadamer's name, and his brand of urbane Heideggerianism, should also be mentioned in this post-war conjuncture, although he precedes the generation we are talking about. Before moving on to the question of how the contemporary philosophical scene looks in Germany, we might perhaps begin with Henrich's description of what the 'passing generation' had in common. First and foremost, despite their obvious philosophical and ideological differences, what they shared was a common context: the overwhelming presence of the trauma

and catastrophe of National Socialism. Thinking of Habermas, if one reads a fascinating early piece from 1961 on 'Der deutsche Idealismus der jüdischen Philosophen' ('The German Idealism of Jewish Philosophers'), it reveals the post-war philosophical ambition to reconcile Jews and Germans.² But Henrich puts the issue in the following terms:

With these considerations in mind one has really understood what the first task of young philosophers in post-war Germany had to be: essentially they worked in order to maintain or restore the worldwide credibility of thinking in the German language. Alongside music, philosophy was for a long time the most significant cultural export good of Germany. Since Kant, German philosophy has distinguished itself through a basic style of investigation that always ended in a synthesis in answer to questions of principle, limit and life.³

To this demand for synthesis, we might also add the requirement of universalism and the method of rational argumentation. So it would seem that it is through a rationally achieved synthesis with a universalist scope that German philosophy responds to the catastrophe of National Socialism; and this is combined with an overwhelming fear of relativism and irrationalism, which always seems to go together with the fear of reducing the *wissenschaftlich* ('scientific') character of philosophy, or the reduction of philosophy to what Henrich calls *Literarisierung* ('making literary'). In your view, is this a fair characterization of German philosophy in the post-war period?

AH Yes, I think it is to a certain degree, but maybe it is not broad or differentiated enough. As is indicated by the Habermas article you mentioned, there was not only the search for the restoration of a certain kind of credibility; there was also from the beginning among some of that post-war generation the ambition to address and clarify the moral disaster of National Socialism. There was therefore not only the attempt to regain the great German tradition in the sense of the Kantian heritage but also to regain or overcome the separation from the Jewish tradition, which was highly specific and extremely important for

the whole of German philosophy at the beginning of the century. This was not only an enterprise of Habermas, but others too, who attempted to reconstruct the specifically Jewish element in German philosophy. If you take the example of someone like Michael Theunissen, he spent a lot of energy in his first major work – the book on the Other – reconstructing the work of Martin Buber, and that was intentional.⁴ It was meant to overcome the separation between the Jewish tradition and the German situation after the Second World War. This is something totally excluded from the picture given by Henrich.

The other thing that he underestimates is, let us say, the moral dimension of the early period of German philosophy after the Second World War, after the disaster or catastrophe. This is something best described by Karl-Otto Apel in a famous article, which I strongly recommend.⁵ There Apel describes his own enterprise – namely, the search for a universal ground for moral principles of respect and autonomy – as a response to, and a clarification of, the moral dimension of the disaster. So there was also the moral dimension in that whole post-war period, and this is also not clearly enough indicated by Henrich. That is very closely connected with people in Bonn. I mean, if you take the three universities mentioned by Henrich, then one should be careful to differentiate between these places. For example, it is interesting that in Münster from very early on – the middle of the 1950s I think – there were several people trying to come into contact with Carl Schmitt. It is hard to explain why suddenly, in a group of younger people, there was this interest in the work of Schmitt when they were all aware that he had been deeply involved in the fascist juridical administration. These people were no longer connected to the fascist world; they were trying to be liberals, democratic liberals. I think one can explain this interest in Schmitt because he was the only one who participated in fascism who never publicly regretted having done so. This made Schmitt quite singular because all the others – Gehlen and even Heidegger – either were silenced by their involvement or very quickly became

converts to the new regime. So, to complicate Henrich's picture, this interest in Schmitt at Münster, which came out of the circle of Joachim Ritter, led to a very fruitful, although not unproblematic, relation to the pre-war past. All I want to say is that Henrich's picture is not differentiated enough. I think it is rather simplistic to say that the main ambition of post-war German philosophy was to regain credibility; there were so many other motives, moral motives. There was also the motive of finding one's place in a culture increasingly influenced by the United States. One should not forget the continuation of the Heideggerian tradition to an incredible degree in the post-war period. In Bonn, where Habermas and Apel were students, the influence of Heidegger was striking. Habermas and Apel started as what we might call left Heideggerians. If one adds these additional elements to Henrich's picture, then I think it is basically correct.

SC OK. But what about the desire for synthesis that Henrich talks about. Does this define the post-war period of German philosophy?

AH Yes. I think what was still very important, and almost seen as self-evident in that period, is that any philosophical enterprise requires synthetic power. I wouldn't reduce that requirement uniquely to Kant's philosophy, as it is a very traditional idea of German philosophy that you have to construct your own system. You have to find your own theory, your own philosophical position. This was a requirement not explicitly formulated but deeply internalized. So it was true that almost all the main figures in the generation we are speaking of had the strong belief that they had to formulate their own systematic philosophical position during the next ten or twenty years. This was indeed as it has been in the pre-war period, where you had Husserl or Nikolai Hartmann or Heidegger; where you not only had philosophical teachers and professional philosophers, but strong philosophical positions connected to specific persons. Each one stood for a

whole programme, and you could describe the philosophical landscape with reference to persons who represented clearly demarcated positions, discrete forms of synthesis. It was clearly understood that in order to find your own synthetic position, your own new and original position, you had to rework the philosophical tradition. Originality was the requirement both before and after the war.

The present generation

SC Let us now turn to the present situation. At the end of Henrich's article, he makes the following observation. First: that the generation that is now coming to an end achieved a remarkable international notoriety, and worldwide recognition. This is most obviously the case with Habermas, but also with Henrich himself and Apel and others. But what of the present generation?

Henrich is extremely critical of the generation that followed his own – your generation – and indeed alludes to a kind of analytic–continental split in German philosophy, between what he sees, rightly or wrongly, as a kind of Derridean playfulness and endless paraphrase on the one side, and an early Putnamian analytic narrowness on the other – what Henrich sees as a bad professionalism. Henrich goes so far as to say that the '68 generation brought up under Adenauer are 'turnshoes', and is rather pessimistic as to whether philosophy can avoid the double threat of *Literarisierung* on the one hand and narrow professionalism on the other. He writes:

If one takes note of the connections I have tried to develop, then it is self-evidently necessary to ask the question as to whether the generation of German philosophers who are now taking up their places will be able to bring about a beginning with long-term effect, or whether they can simply be understood as a distant reverberation of the Weimar Republic in the radically changed conditions of the post-war period. An effective break in motivational history [*Motivationsgeschichte*] would then first enter onto the scene with those who were born after the war, in Adenauer's Federal Republic. It might be able to explain why the surprising success of post-war German philosophy in the wider world finds no continuation for the time being.

Is Henrich right? Is your generation so bad? Is this description at all justified?

AH That is also a very complicated question. To start with the last sentence, the fact that the younger generation of philosophers – the middle generation let's say – born in the 1940s and early 1950s has not gained such an international reputation or recognition is also due to the fact that it was only after the 1970s that the Anglo-Saxon colonization of the philosophical world began. This situation was something that the earlier generation was not really confronted with. In that time, I would say, there was a kind of multicultural situation in philosophy, albeit a multiculturalism restricted to the Western world. What I mean is that there were strong influences from France on the philosophical agenda in the 1950s and 1960s. Sartre had an incredible influence; French existentialism was one of the main positions at that time. And Merleau-Ponty was famous and widely read. Thus, it was not a situation in which there was a clear hegemony of one tradition: Anglo-Saxon philosophy. So it was maybe a little easier at that time, and the chances of gaining international respect were higher, as well as having cross-national contacts, influences, etc. So that is the first remark I would like to make: that today, under these new conditions where it is obviously the fact (and I don't want to judge this fact) that the analytic tradition is hegemonic, it is much more complicated for people from other countries easily to gain that kind of international respect.

The other remark would be directly concerned with Henrich's description. I think to a certain degree he is right, but maybe it is more complicated to explain why that is the case. I think it is right to say that there is a new tendency to a kind of bad professionalism in German philosophy. If you look at what normally happens in the big meetings of the German Philosophical Association, it is extremely boring, and to a certain degree that is because of professionalism. I don't even see that there are many tendencies towards what he calls Derridean playfulness.

I don't really see that in philosophy. Maybe it has a bigger role in other disciplines or in other areas, but not in philosophy. But what Henrich is underestimating, I think, and characteristically underestimating, is that in the 1960s when this generation received their main influences in philosophy as students there was a new motivation emerging, of which he is not really aware. It is perhaps not surprising that he is not aware of it because, as far as I know, Henrich reacted negatively to what took place in the '68 student movement – namely, that new questions came up which together formed a horizon of motives for younger philosophers. Clearly, the main motive was for the first time a really sharp awareness of the fact that one's own parents – fathers, sometimes mothers – had collaborated in fascism. This was the experience of that generation, I think, and you can still see it in some of the small philosophical enterprises where it functions as a kind of background motivation. I must say that the other strong motive is something beyond Henrich's horizon – the whole question of what Habermas is now calling, in the title of his latest book, *Die Einbeziehung des Anderen* (The Inclusion of the Other).⁶ This is the fact that others are not only playing the role of citizens, but are there in very different roles; that the other has many faces; that it is more of a task to acknowledge or recognize these other spheres of the other. The whole problem of the other is something that was new for that generation. Maybe the title of Theunissen's book already indicated that task, but it became a very strong force behind a lot of the writings of the 1960s' generation, as a background cultural motivation.

The other background motivation I would mention is the problem of freedom, which is obviously the main issue of the '68 movement. We might speak here of the ambivalences of liberalization. What I mean is the fact that freedom is something more radical than seen in earlier times; that freedom is also about cultural roles, sexual roles, gender roles, which is something that this generation created and explored. And I think this also goes some way to explaining why, at the beginning of the 1970s and

1980s, there were still some philosophical figures of my generation who tried to create original work of a synthetic character, who were either ignored by the system, or who became more or less integrated into it, but continued along the same route. To mention one name: Andreas Wildt, who never got a university position, who came originally from Dieter Henrich, and then was an assistant of Michael Theunissen. He wrote a very interesting book on Hegel and Fichte in this synthetic tradition, which is an extremely powerful reinterpretation of the practical philosophy of Hegel and Fichte with the aim of creating a kind of moral philosophy aware of the non-legal relation to others.⁷ This is only an example. It is meant to indicate that Henrich is right in his description of the present generation, but that he is ignoring some stronger energies in that generation which either had the chance to survive the last fifteen years – fifteen years of high professionalization and a boring development in German philosophy – or were repressed by the philosophical system and the philosophical establishment. He is simply overlooking the fact that the philosophical establishment ignored some of the creativity of the '68 movement.

SC Is there a philosophical establishment in Germany? If so, how would you characterize it?

AH Yes, there definitely is and it is typical that people like Habermas, Apel, Theunissen and Tugendhat never belonged to that establishment. There is an establishment, the members of which are not even very well known in the outside world, who are mainly professionals doing their ordinary jobs, writing more or less interesting or boring books, but who had something like the power of academic philosophy in their grasp. And they are to a certain degree responsible for the fact that more creative persons never had a chance. Take Peter Sloterdijk, who at the outset was quite an interesting philosopher, who very early on wrote an extremely interesting article on Foucault, and then

published his book on the *Critique of Cynical Reason*.⁸ Maybe if he had had a chance in the philosophical system, he wouldn't have gone in the direction he is now going – namely, a kind of wild journalism.

SC You have already begun to answer my next question, which concerns the *Motivationsgeschichte* of contemporary German philosophy. If the motivation of the post-war generation was found in a response to the moral disaster of National Socialism, then the question that Henrich raises concerns the motivation for your own generation. You have answered this question in terms of the problem of freedom, the questioning of established orders, and, tangentially perhaps, the whole issue of power. Let us push the logic of Henrich's position a little further. What Henrich seems prepared to admit – which is an extremely interesting and un-English thought – is that there has to be some sort of almost traumatic motivation to philosophizing; that philosophy comes out of, and tries to make good on, a traumatic situation. If one were looking for a recent historical event in Germany that might provide such a motivation to philosophizing, then one would obviously think of '89: the *Wende*. Now maybe it is just too soon to tell what is going to happen, if anything, and whether the changes in Germany will have intellectual consequences. Of course, one persuasive diagnosis of what happened in the philosophical profession after '89 is a complete philosophical takeover of the East by the West, which is obviously to do with the peculiar character that philosophy had in the ideological superstructure of the former DDR – that is, its strongly Marxist-Leninist orientation. Do you think that what took place was simply a takeover? And do you think anything will come out of the reunification of Germany as a historical event in terms of a possible motivation for philosophy?

AH: Yes, without hesitation I would even use the word *colonization* to describe what took place in the former DDR. I think it was a takeover. It has to do with the fact that there

is a philosophical establishment in the West which was not sensitive enough in the period of reunification towards creative potentialities in the DDR. I mean that there were people who were intellectuals, creative, quite original, but not established. They were forced to write in another kind of language, not that of Western professionalism. I think it would have been better not simply to introduce our professional standards into that new situation, but to open the standards to other forms of talent and other potentialities; or at least try to integrate those people into the new university and economic system. But that was never really tried. In that sense it was a colonization process on both the administrative and the intellectual level. Philosophy in the DDR was simply assimilated. I can't really say whether the experience of '89 is a kind of motivational force which could lead to a new kind of philosophical originality. At the present time, I don't see anything like that happening. Maybe there are some new discussions, once again, about how to respect the other, if you understand the former DDR as the other of our own society. And there are some quite interesting debates which try to apply the multiculturalism controversy to exactly that situation. But I don't see that it is really a kind of new horizon which has been opened up by that experience. It has to do with the fact that nobody experienced reunification as a kind of traumatization. It wasn't a traumatic experience. Maybe it will become a traumatic experience for those from the East who had no chance to survive as philosophers or as intellectuals after reunification.

And let me say something else about this whole idea of *Motivationsgeschichte*: I think it is very interesting to use that kind of concept. I think it is quite different from the self-understanding of philosophy in the analytical world and runs against all forms of professionalism. Henrich seems to be convinced that there must be extra motivation behind serious philosophy. I think that's true. At least it is true for the German tradition, where traumatic, or let's just say deep, experiences provide the motivation for the creative synthesis of which he

speaks. The clearest case is German Idealism and Romanticism. It is clear that the experience in Germany of the French Revolution was the kind of experience that Henrich has in mind. And the same is true for the First World War, which was a traumatic experience for philosophers like Heidegger. So the question again is whether the fact that there was not something like a deep negative experience in the background and education of my own generation leads to a kind of philosophical emptiness. Although, as I have already said, I think that my generation had its own background motivations which were not negligible.

SC Of course, the curious thing about trauma is that traumatic neurosis often has a delayed effect; it is always *nachträglich*. If you look at the last fifty years of German history, there was the trauma of the post-war generation, the generation born before the war, that studied in the post-war years and then, in Henrich's words, tried to restore the credibility of German philosophy. But what is interesting about post-war German history is that the trauma took a generation to begin to be worked through, so that it is the '68 generation that in a sense feels the trauma and is visited by the sins of the fathers, where the Holocaust only becomes a significant national issue from the 1960s and a dominating issue in the 1970s. So, in a sense, whether the *Wende* will become traumatic for the following generation is still an open question. But let us go on to our second topic.

German philosophy, Anglo-American hegemony and Franco-German (mis)understanding

SC For me, it has been an odd but interesting experience being in Frankfurt over the past year. Although I have felt increasingly compelled in recent years by the first generation of the Frankfurt School, a lot of my work, as you know, has been concerned with contemporary French philosophy – in particular, the work of Derrida and Levinas, but more generally with post-Heideggerian phenomenology. This brings me to the question of the relation

of philosophy in Germany to other traditions – in particular, the strongly contrasting relation to the Anglo-American and French contexts, where the complete acceptance of the former seems to be predicated upon steadfast refusal of the latter.

I think it would be genuinely surprising to many people concerned with philosophy in the English-speaking world how utterly much contemporary German philosophy is dominated by the Anglo-American agenda. In metaphysics, epistemology and philosophy of mind and language, it is difficult to see any substantial difference between what passes for philosophy in Germany and what a student might expect to find in a mainstream syllabus in Britain. The currency of philosophical exchange is the names of Davidson, Quine, Putnam, Bernard Williams, etc., and there is a considerable interest in post-analytic philosophers like Taylor and Rorty. And many of the younger German students I have met have little knowledge of the German tradition, with the exception of Kant and elements of German Idealism. During my time at Frankfurt, no courses were offered on phenomenology, whether Husserlian or Heideggerian; not to mention the absence of Dilthey, the hermeneutic tradition, and obviously the complete absence of French philosophy, with the complex exception of Foucault. For me, this was both surprising and slightly saddening. Thus, for the visitor from the English-speaking world, philosophy in Germany is characterized by a certain shock of the familiar. On the other hand, two things are on offer in Germany that a student could not expect to find in Britain: the philological tradition of textual study; and also, more importantly, the tradition of social philosophy, which is more or less absent in the UK. We might like to discuss this later.

However, this is not my point, for what is interesting is that there is a complete openness to everything that comes out of the English-speaking world, and to what Henrich calls an *Englischen gewonnene Argumentationskultur* (a culture of argumentation won from the English); whilst there is a complete blindness and antagonism to the French philosophical scene. Again, Henrich

is revealing in this regard, for he makes the contrast between the need for 'solid argumentation' and 'evidence', and the French tendency, which he characterizes in terms of the identification of philosophy with literature and the domination of the masters of suspicion – Marx, Nietzsche and Freud.⁹ Of course, one can find many similar statements in Habermas, even in his most recent texts.¹⁰ Such statements are symptomatic, I believe. Do you think that the openness to Anglo-American philosophy has been achieved at the expense of a relative blindness to the French tradition? And how do you see this geo-philosophical picture? What does the French tradition represent for the post-war generation of German philosophers? To my mind, it seems to play the role of a memory of a German tradition no longer acceptable in Germany, a tradition allegedly compromised by fascism. In this sense, French philosophy is a sort of 'return of the repressed' for German philosophy. How do you see this complex set of issues?

AH Let me start with the last point. I do not think it is totally fair to describe the role of post-structuralism or deconstructivism as being only a kind of repressed memory of the German tradition. That is simply not true, because it underestimates the strong impact that Heidegger still has on German philosophy. I think that what you say may be true for Frankfurt, and especially true for Habermas. But it is not a fair picture of the philosophical situation in Germany. You shouldn't forget that not only in Freiburg but in many places – Heidelberg and Tübingen, maybe in Munich or Berlin – the role of Heidegger is still quite dominant and is even growing today. One philosophical consequence of the situation after '89 was a kind of broad rehabilitation of Heidegger. So in many ways matters are the reverse of the way you claim. The fact that Habermas is still criticizing a certain Heideggerianism is a result of the growing influence of Heidegger in Germany. The whole vast enterprise of the publication of Heidegger's *Gesamtausgabe* is an indication, an objective indication, of that fact.

I think the more significant fact today is the ever-growing influence of Anglo-Saxon philosophy in Germany. To explain that, I think it is necessary to remember that when we started studying philosophy (and now I am talking about members of my own generation), the German university was in most places, with very few exceptions – Frankfurt being one, Heidelberg and Berlin others – utterly dominated by the philological tradition. My own experience, when I started studying philosophy in Bonn, was that this was an extremely boring kind of philosophy: thousands of lines interpreting Kant again, or Hegel, or maybe Aristotle, or the whole grand tradition in a kind of endless repetition. This is a style of philosophy which is still quite present today and sometimes not really seen from outside because it is so boring. Factually speaking, I am sure that we have more literature on Hegel than any other philosophical culture in the world. But our literature on Hegel is, I would say, simply more boring than that produced in the United States today. We have a strong tradition of philological expertise and excellence, a style which finds its highest expression in Gadamer, because he is brilliant at producing philosophical arguments by reinterpreting classical texts. But normally what is going on is a kind of philological exegesis which leads, I would say, to no significant systematic results.

So that is the background you have to be aware of in order to understand why a lot of members of my own generation, and especially parts of the younger generation, are very attracted by the Anglo-Saxon style of argumentation. It at least produces a kind of philosophical atmosphere in which arguments count; in which you have to produce arguments; and in which you can have fruitful discussions about where arguments lead. In a philological culture, there are no debates like that at all.

SC So, you are saying that analytic philosophy in a German context has had an emancipatory effect.

AH Yes, exactly. It emancipated us from extremely boring teachers, and is still emancipating us from them. Even if you look at our own department in Frankfurt, you can see how fruitful it can be to learn a little bit of the Anglo-Saxon tradition in order to get rid of these boring people who are repeating one sentence after the other without making any point. The consequence of this, and I think that you are right, is a certain and still growing underestimation of the French tradition, which I would not reduce (as Henrich does) to a kind of playfulness or reduction of philosophy to literature. This is simply an unfair description of what has happened in French philosophy in the last fifty years. It is an underestimation of the phenomenological tradition, which is still extremely lively, powerful and fruitful in France. I think it is true that this type of French philosophy is getting lost today in Germany.

The fact that there has been no fruitful dialogue with French philosophy during the last twenty years is more difficult to explain. I think to a certain degree it is a result of a very unfruitful period in German philosophy during the last ten or fifteen years, where Habermas produced a picture of French philosophy as being nothing other than a kind of playful literature. This seems to have had the consequence that in the end nobody really took it seriously, and Henrich is simply repeating what Habermas is saying. I simply think Henrich is no longer aware of what is going on in France. So I reckon that Habermas's intervention has had a very damaging effect and placed the Franco-German relation under the heading: irrationality versus rationality. I think this is a fruitless dualism. It means that we are now in a situation in which this kind of dialogue has been interrupted. Of course, there are exceptions; and it is interesting to see that in some analytical areas of German philosophy an interest in Sartre is growing again – for example, in the work of Peter Bieri. That is, Sartre is being understood and taken seriously as a philosopher of subjectivity. With respect to Henrich, this is interesting because it is his disciples, like Manfred Frank, who are taking Sartre seriously.

SC Sartre is also an exception in Britain, where he is the so-called continental philosopher who has most often been taught on philosophy syllabuses, and whose concerns seem to have been closest to analytic philosophy. This has often struck me as a curious state of affairs which is premised on simply not reading Sartre's later work.

But I would like to pick up again on the question of social philosophy in a slightly roundabout way. Listening to what you said about the emancipatory function of analytic philosophy in Germany, I think we find ourselves in an oddly paradoxical cultural situation. For your generation of philosophers educated in Germany, the fact that the reading of analytic philosophy had an emancipatory effect contrasts strongly with the experience of that generation of British philosophers (like me) who rather awkwardly call themselves 'continental' or 'modern European', or whatever. In Britain, for good or ill, theories were imported from France and Germany in order to confront the perceived cultural irrelevance and apolitical neutrality or conservatism of the analytic tradition. So we find in Britain and Germany precisely opposing philosophical resources being employed for the same emancipatory goal, which is an odd situation. Perhaps the philosophical grass is always greener on the other side of the cultural fence. But what I would like to emphasize here, which is not properly understood in Germany, is that the interest in continental philosophy often goes together, with certain striking exceptions, with a broadly leftist concern for the social, cultural and political function of the philosopher. This is supported by the British cultural fantasy of the continental intellectual as that person who can address their culture, who speaks out of a public culture, and who speaks to a public culture, who is socially and politically engaged, etc. And this fantasy opposes another – namely, the image of English philosophy as being insulated from cultural and political concerns, hidden away in the secluded beauty of Oxbridge colleges. I should emphasize that all of what I say in this connection is articulated at the level of cultural fantasy.

AH Let me say something about social philosophy, because it is an intellectual field that allows philosophers to play the role you just referred to. I think this is one really specific element of the German tradition which to a great extent has to do with the Jewish influence on the German tradition. I would say it is a kind of Jewish-German heritage and it starts, I think, with German Idealism, especially in Hegel, but also in Fichte, if you think of how some of the latter's writings are concerned with a diagnosis of his times. This tradition stems from a Protestant movement, but then goes over to a secularized Jewish culture in Marx and from that time has been part of the philosophical heritage in Germany. If you take people like Georg Simmel or Martin Buber, or the early sociologists in Germany; if you take Benjamin and Adorno; then this is something that I would describe in a very broad sense as social philosophy. And there are even other influences which come together in this connection: some of Max Scheler's writings offer a diagnosis of the time we are living in. So this is a heritage which was quite powerful and which to a certain degree could survive, and is still an important element of German philosophy in those places that are not dominated by a kind of empty professionalism. In this connection, I would mention also Theunissen, who at a certain period was doing nothing that one would call social philosophy; obviously Habermas; but also a Catholic philosopher like Robert Spaemann, who I think is doing a kind of social philosophy, in so far as he is offering a kind of critical understanding of certain social pathologies in our present society. Although he would describe himself as a philosopher of language and morality, Ernst Tugendhat could be understood as a social philosopher in this sense. So this is a very important element of German philosophy and I would think it is one of the main tasks of the younger generations to keep this tradition alive. If Henrich is right, if the situation of my generation is really torn between empty professionalism and a kind of empty playfulness, then the tradition of social philosophy would die out, and that would be dreadful.

What is *critical* in contemporary Critical Theory?

SC That brings us neatly to our third and final topic. For if there is a tradition where social philosophy is maintained, it is the intellectual tradition and school associated with the city in which we are having this conversation, namely Frankfurt. One has become accustomed to speak of three generations of Critical Theory: that of Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse as the first, and that of Habermas and Apel as the second. One also speaks, much more nebulously, of a third generation, the most prominent member of which would be yourself.

But there is an interesting philosophical question for me in how the Habermasian impulse of Critical Theory is to be continued, or not continued, supplemented or whatever. To my mind, there are two possible routes being taken both here in Frankfurt and elsewhere. One of these would see Critical Theory become part of mainstream political philosophy, what I would call a sort of 'left Rawlsianism' – a tendency that would seem to be exacerbated by Habermas's recent work on legal theory. The other route is to adopt the Habermasian discourse ethics framework as offering a powerful theory of justice, but to claim, as you do, that it overlooks the whole Hegelian dimension of the dialectical struggle for recognition, and in particular what you call the first level of recognition – namely, the question of the private sphere, of the development of the subject, questions of love, the family, or whatever. Before we go any further, despite the interpretative violence of what I have said, does this sound like a fair representation, in terms of these two routes?

AH Yes, I think it is a fair description. But I would see more than you in the implications of these two routes. The first route, which you describe more or less as 'left Rawlsianism', to my mind does entail a definitive end to the tradition of Critical Theory. It no longer really represents the broader aims of that philosophical culture or school, because it would mean that Critical Theory is introduced into mainstream political theory or political

philosophy and would then give up its own identity. Maybe this is not a mistaken development. I do not want to say it is wrong. I only want to say that this route would lead to the end of the tradition of Critical Theory. But maybe that is a fruitful result; maybe that tradition is over. Maybe it is simply an artificial aim to try to continue the tradition of Critical Theory, to continue it in a world that has not only radically changed both socially and politically, but that has also been transformed philosophically. Maybe it was even Habermas's indirect and unstated intention to indicate in his later writings that this tradition can't be artificially kept alive any longer. We should therefore combine the best elements of this tradition with mainstream political philosophy and defend some stronger theory on this new terrain – what you would call 'left Rawlsianism'. So this is one possible development. My only point is that it would no longer make any sense to speak of this development in terms of Critical Theory.

The other route, which I would see myself as espousing, is to maintain and keep open some of the broader ambitions of Critical Theory. I would call that a philosophically informed social theory, which means that we are interested not only in describing or criticizing certain important injustices of our society, but also in certain pathologies of our society. And I would say that the main ambitions of the first generation of Critical Theory can be understood in that way, even the extreme interest in art which is common to Adorno, Benjamin, Marcuse and even Horkheimer. I take it that the link between art and social pathology is that the former can be seen as a kind of representational medium of the latter, or is a medium that is to some extent free of these pathologies. Art is a placeholder for social pathologies.

So I would say the only chance we have to keep the tradition of Critical Theory alive is to continue that kind of enterprise – namely, the social-philosophical enterprise of a kind of diagnosis of our present culture, the pathologies of that culture, of a certain capitalist culture. And that means a great deal; I mean it requires a lot of philosophical work. So I think your description

is right, and yet the consequences of these two directions are more radical than you allow. The first route entails a dying out of the Critical Theory tradition; the second involves the ambition to keep it alive. I don't want to suggest that it is easy to keep that tradition alive, but I think it's the only chance we have if we want to do it.

SC You have already begun to answer a related question that I wanted to pose, but let me specify this a little further. It has become something of a truism to say, as I have heard you say yourself, that Critical Theory moves between the poles of Kant and Hegel, recalling the famous *Kant oder Hegel* debates of the 1980s. Now, in terms of the two routes I delineated, one way of looking at what I call 'left Rawlsianism' is in terms of an increasingly Kantian development in Critical Theory, whereas the other route could easily be seen to represent a much more Hegelian tendency. So Critical Theory moves between the poles of Kant and Hegel. But the question that I want to come back to, which was suggested by Elliot Jurist, is the issue of what is *critical* in Critical Theory. If it moves between the poles of Kant and Hegel, then what role do the three great 'masters of suspicion' continue to play in the project of Critical Theory? Marx, Freud and Nietzsche: each of these thinkers, in distinct and nuanced ways, plays an organizing function in the first generation of Critical Theory, most obviously in Adorno. What role do the critiques of capital, of bourgeois morality and primacy of consciousness, continue to play in the project of Critical Theory?

AH That, I think, has to do with how one describes these two possible routes that Critical Theory can take today. If it takes the Kantian route, then I think you would be right that the masters of suspicion would no longer play an important role, perhaps with the exception of Marx. Even the Habermas of contemporary legal theory is still very aware not so much of Marx as of a Marxist tradition of critical economy. If there is ever to be

something like a 'left Rawlsianism', then it would have to be highly influenced by the insights of a Marxist critical economy. If I speak of the Hegelian route, my understanding of this tradition (which is not to say it is there in Hegel himself) would include those components you mentioned – namely, the critical insights of the Nietzschean and the Freudian traditions. According to my own understanding of these matters, if you take a Hegelian route then you have a much more complex understanding of the subject – that is, a richer account of the motivating drives in a society. To adopt the picture of social pathologies means to include psychoanalytic components, and maybe even components of Nietzsche's moral psychology. I am acutely aware of that. For example, if you speak of recognition you can't be so naive as not to see the negative side of it, which Nietzsche was aware of when he spoke of resentment. I think you have to broaden out the moral psychology of Critical Theory, and you can do that only by incorporating Freudian and Nietzschean elements. Taking the Hegelian route seriously would sooner or later mean including the task of incorporating insights of that critical tradition. So I would say that it is only the consequence of the present situation that these elements are not really strongly enough represented.

But in describing the picture in the way you do, I think you underestimate the fact that Critical Theory is not only represented by Habermas and his disciples. Even here in Frankfurt there are other groups, other philosophers, who try to keep that critical tradition alive in a more powerful way. If you think of somebody like Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, who is responsible for the collected edition of Horkheimer's work, then I think he is now doing serious and interesting work on Nietzsche's moral psychology and keeping that tradition alive within Critical Theory.¹¹ So my hope would be that in taking a Hegelian route, which for me does not mean reducing Critical Theory to the enterprise of political philosophy defined by liberal principles of justice, Critical Theory would include elements of tradition you mentioned and keep alive the memory of Freud and Nietzsche.

SC But do you think the language of pathology is sufficient to capture what you are after? I suppose I have a rather naive problem with the language of social pathologies in so far as pathology would seem to imply a dysfunctional behaviour. What I mean is that the language of pathologies always seems to presuppose some normative conception of how these pathologies might be overcome, or normalized – that is, that we could correct the social dysfunctioning and return to a fully integrated *Lebenswelt*.

AH I guess I think you can't do it without the language of pathologies. And even in Adorno and Horkheimer, and especially Marcuse, although they would never talk of normal life or normal society, the Critical Theory of society presupposes some vision of a society that would exclude the sorts of damage they describe. So this kind of normative underpinning of an enterprise like the critique of social pathologies is always there. I am fully aware of the difficulties of the notion of pathologies, especially its roots in the quite complicated history of which Foucault was most acutely aware: the deeply ambivalent history of normalization. In this sense, pathology was mainly a conceptual means for creating or excluding subjects. On the other hand, I simply don't have a better word for describing what Nietzsche was doing when he described nihilism not only as a fruitful starting point for one's own enterprise, but also as the disastrous situation of European culture. Or what Freud was doing in his more sociological writings in describing the situation of this present culture. I think one way to approach this would be to describe such analyses as a diagnosis of social pathologies. Maybe there are better words, but I would say that the task remains the same even if you find a better word to describe it.

SC Let us go to the last set of questions. If we (according to you) maintain the Hegelian impulse in Critical Theory – that is (according to me), maintain the critical impulse in Critical Theory

– then the question this raises has to do with the nature of the philosophical task. I would, first, want to assume against Rorty that there is a task for philosophy, and that this task cannot be reduced to the business of literary criticism and journalism (not that these are such bad things). What I mean is that the critical impulse of Critical Theory – and not just Critical Theory, but also in my view phenomenology and deconstruction – was always linked, and rightly to my mind, to the emancipatory function of philosophy. Critique and utopia were two ends of the same piece of string, in the sense that the critical impulse is maintained in relationship to a utopian, transformative, emancipatory hope for thinking and for the world.

Now the first issue would be whether you agree with that, whether there is a philosophical task and how the philosophical task of critique is linked to the question of emancipation and the utopian element in Critical Theory. And the second question, if one accepts that, is how the question of emancipation changes the philosophical task. What I mean by this is that it seems to me that one of the things that the Frankfurt tradition inherits from Marx is a certain conception of the poverty of philosophy. That is, if philosophy is going to be in the business of reflecting upon what prevents and enables human emancipation, then it has to be linked – essentially – to *non-philosophy*, whether we conceive that as sociology, aesthetics, psychoanalysis or whatever. How do you see this set of issues?

AH That is a most complicated question.

SC That's for sure, which is why I asked it. Let me restate it more directly and slightly nostalgically: how do you understand the relation between philosophy and *praxis*?

AH I would like to answer in two steps. As a first step, I would simply like to say that even the more conventional tasks of philosophy – for example, conceptual clarification of structures

of our practical behaviour – are kinds of emancipation. I think it would simply be nonsense to say that philosophy in this sense is not internally linked to a kind of human emancipation, if you understand emancipation as a process in which we gain autonomy by clarifying our own as yet unknown dependencies and the elements of our situation. In that respect, this is a kind of Habermasian answer: namely, that all philosophy represents a kind of emancipatory interest of the human species.

But I think you have in mind a more restricted notion of emancipation, namely social emancipation, and in that respect I also strongly believe, against Rorty, that there is a task for philosophy today because there is no other place, and there is no other theoretical or intellectual medium which allows us, with a certain intention of universality, to reflect on systematic deficiencies of our own culture, our own society. I think it is wrong to say, as Rorty does, that this is only a task for literature. It is clear that you can understand literature in such a way, as a kind of medium for violations, deficiencies and ruptures of our life.

SC For example, if we think of Rorty's rather good discussion of George Orwell.¹²

AH Right. You could even say all literature is of that kind. It reflects or imagines or demonstrates, by means of aesthetic mediation, those deficiencies, ruptures or traumas of everyday life. But by definition that kind of literature is extremely subjective, and is meant to be so. It is only fruitful as long as it represents an extremely radicalized subjective perspective on those deficiencies. The question is: are there places, are there mediums, are there intellectual spaces, in which we together as members of a society have the chance to find justifiable articulations of those deficiencies? And I must say that the social sciences, which maybe in the beginning played more or less that role, can no longer do so because of an excessive professionalization. So I think this task goes over to philosophy. I think there has been a kind of change

in the intellectual division of labour in the last hundred years. If you look at the situation in which sociology started, if you look to the first generation of famous sociologists – Max Weber, Émile Durkheim, Georg Simmel – I would say that they started as social philosophers. There was no really clear differentiation between philosophy and sociology in their work. They started as theorists interested in a diagnosis of certain deficiencies, pathologies or crises of our own culture. The professionalization of sociology has led it into other directions – piecemeal work of a certain kind, very fruitful sometimes, less fruitful sometimes. But it no longer represents the kind of conceptual space in which you can articulate those common and intersubjectively articulated crises or deficiencies. So I think this role reverts to philosophy, which is where it started from originally.

It's an interesting historical process which you can observe from, let's say, Rousseau until today. Rousseau was a kind of sociologist – his critique of culture is the first moment of sociology – but he understood himself as a philosopher. Then you have a long period of philosophy doing exactly that job. I mean that Hegel did that job, but not only Hegel; a lot of his generation played that role, and we have John Stuart Mill in your own tradition. Then that role goes over to sociology and was kept alive there for fifty years or so. But since the Second World War, the professionalization of sociology has been so radical that now I think it is a very necessary task of philosophy to resume that role. As I said, the role is one of opening up a conceptual space in which we together can debate certain deficiencies of our own life-world and culture with at least the hope for universality.

SC And where would that lead? *Wozu*, as they say over here?

AH To the opposite of what Rorty wants. That this task can't go over to literature. That there is a necessary task for philosophy.

SC So in that sense, if Rorty argues for the subordination of philosophy to democracy, then you, like me, would want to make the opposite case.

AH I would argue for a fruitful dialogue between a philosophy of the kind I have discussed and a democratic culture, a democratic public. It would mean to say that we are the specialists for the deficiencies of society – that we are, in a sense, the doctors of society. If we want to be in dialogue with the public, then we cannot only be specialists. I think the whole idea of subordination is wrong, whether it is a subordination of one type or the other.

SC So philosophy is an essential moment of democratic reflection.

AH Exactly. It's a wonderful last word.

Notes

- Conversation recorded in Frankfurt am Main, 7 January 1998. Simon Critchley would like to thank Noreen Harburt for her help in transcribing this exchange.
1. Dieter Henrich, 'Eine Generation im Abgang' ['A Passing Generation'] column, *Merkur* 49, 1995, pp. 1055–63.
 2. Jürgen Habermas, *Philosophisch-politische Profile*, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 1981, pp. 39–64.
 3. Henrich, 'Eine Generation im Abgang' ['A Passing Generation'] column, p. 1060.
 4. Michael Theunissen, *The Other*, trans. C. Macann, MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 1984.
 5. See Karl-Otto Apel, 'Zurueck zur Normalitaet? Oder Koennten wir aus der nationalen Katastrophe etwas Besonderes gelernt haben?', in *Diskurs und Verantwortung*, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 1988, pp. 370–474.
 6. Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 1997.
 7. Andreas Wildt, *Autonomie und Anerkennung: Hegels Moralkritik im Lichte seiner Fichte-Rezeption*, Klett-Cotta, Stuttgart, 1982.
 8. *Critique of Cynical Reason*, trans. M. Eldred, Minnesota University Press, Minneapolis, 1987. Sloterdijk's early essay on Foucault is 'Michel Foucaults strukturelle Theorie der Geschichte', *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 79, 1972, pp. 161 ff.
 9. Henrich, 'Eine Generation im Abgang' ['A Passing Generation'] column, p. 1059.
 10. See Habermas's almost self-parodic characterization of Heidegger and postmodernism as part of a critique of the reflexive modernization hypothesis in Beck and Giddens in his 1997 lecture, 'Jenseits des Nationalstaats? Bemerkungen zu Folgeproblem der wirtschaftlichen Globalisierung' (unpublished typescript).
 11. In this regard, see Schmid Noerr's article on Horkheimer in *A Companion to Continental Philosophy*, ed. S. Critchley and W. Schroeder, Blackwell, Oxford and Cambridge MA, 1998, pp. 362–9.
 12. *Contingency, Irony, Solidarity*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989, pp. 169–88.

12 **What is – or what is not – contemporary French philosophy, today?**

ÉRIC ALLIEZ

The question that serves as the title of my lecture, the question that *motivates* this lecture, is sustained by a negation that is absolutely necessary to the construction of the problematic I aim here to open. For I have found no other means than the ‘labour of the negative’, in the most literal sense, to submit my claim to the order of reasons that has led to the absence in France of chairs of philosophy defined in this way – such that the phrase ‘contemporary French philosophy’ be immediately understood, as we currently understand it here in the UK. The theoretical field implied by this phrase invites a problematization of both the philosophical and the contemporary from which a certain French otherness may be deduced. Contemporary French philosophy is *not* simply the philosophy produced in France (or in the French language), by and in the institution of the university, according to a diachronic line whose moments and diversity could be gathered up in a calendrical present/presence, whose variable dimensions stand for the ‘contemporary epoch’.

More generally, and more academically, in the distribution adhered to by the French university system for defining chairs of philosophy, ‘contemporary philosophy’ is wedded to the official chronology of the contemporary used by historians, and it begins in... 1800. This poses a number of amusing problems when it comes to studying Kant, who is split in two by the turning point of the French Revolution, which is said to complete the modern period (opened, as everyone is supposed to know, by the taking

of Constantinople). One is thus constrained and forced to adopt, by convention and by consensus, the most philosophical date for the inauguration of the contemporary: that of the publication of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781). It is almost unnecessary to say that in an institution whose destiny has long been negotiated between 'traditionalists' (privileging the study of the texts of this tradition), theorists of knowledge (with whom the first generation of French 'analytic' philosophers began by allying themselves) and the tenants of moral and political philosophy (the very name is something of a manifesto...), the *most* contemporary French philosophy (in the sense of a philosophical actuality that it will be necessary for us to define better below) is superbly ignored.

The contemporary could, according to a reading heavily guided by the 1970s, also encompass the entirety of twentieth-century French philosophy, but it would analyse less the '1900 moment' or the 'rupture of the 1930s' (two objects of recent study) than the passage from the generation of the three Hs (Hegel–Husserl–Heidegger), so-called after 1945, to the generation of the three 'masters of suspicion: Nietzsche, Marx and Freud'.¹

We must point out straight away that the game and the philosophical stakes of the second half of the twentieth century would make *at least* these six (Germans) intervene – along with several others, pushed back by this analysis into the nineteenth century, before being returned to favour as a somewhat precious and regressively 'Franco-French' anomaly. I am thinking here inevitably of Bergson (who published *The Creative Mind* in 1934) and of the conceptual machination that Deleuze was able to extract from him, in order to emphasize the speculative principles of a superior empiricism, shattering the disjunction between the 'philosophy of life' and the 'philosophy of the concept', whilst singularly complicating the relationship between philosophy and science. One may also recall here the iconoclastic reading of Bergson proposed by Michel Serres in his *Eulogy to Philosophy in the French Language*. Bergson

reconstructed an unexpected bridge between the intuitions of the mathematicians Hadamard and Poincaré at the start of the twentieth century and the contemporary theories of chaos, which also infuse the Deleuzo–Guattarian plane of immanence. This is a Bergson (not unlike Gabriel Tarde, an author to whom I have applied myself, reinscribing the contemporary debate between philosophy and the social sciences) caught up in the ‘total forgetting of the properly French traditions of the start of the century’, evacuated by the total domination of German thought framed by the background of war (and the century is presented as a *between* of two world wars), which made *logicism* return in mathematics, *determinism* in history and psychology (and also in psychoanalysis), and imposed *dialectics* as the philosophy of war. And so Serres concludes his argument by evoking the ‘obligation to think the tangled multiplicities of the new contingency’, an exigency which appears in real time as an anachronism cut by the thread, if not the iron hand, of history.²

Contemporary French anti-philosophy

It is also possible – and this concerns my own proposal more directly – to make ‘contemporary French philosophy’ begin with the caesura of the post-war period and its traumas (thinking ‘after’ Auschwitz, Stalinism, colonialism), traumas that would give birth to the philosophical generation of the 1960s – animated as it was by the deconstruction of the metaphysics of modern democratic reason implicated or enveloped in the catastrophe. This generation would culminate in ‘68-Thought’, before giving way, after the marketing episode of the New Philosophers of Anti-totalitarianism, with their concepts as big as hollow teeth, in the 1980s (those years which Félix Guattari called the ‘winter years’), to a new generation – I’m citing Alain Renaut – ‘marked by a powerful re-evaluation of the values of intelligibility of modernity and of the democratic idea’. This would (supposedly) allow ‘France’ to rejoin ‘the state of the philosophical and

political problematic dominating everywhere else'.³ What has, on the plane of political philosophy in the strict sense, been called 'New French Thought' – and which, in reaction to the anti-humanism of 68-Thought, varies in form between a liberal-conservative neo-Tocquevillian paradigm, an allegedly progressive ethics of communication and a republican philosophy of universal human rights – would in this way mark the time of a pacified dialogue between contemporary continental philosophy (at the categorial outset, phenomenological, but more broadly of a hermeneutic spectrum) and the Anglo-Saxon analytic tradition (which, it must be said, has been broadly represented in France by this generation). In this way, in France, the new contemporary French philosophy, the contemporary French philosophy of *today* – I'm still paraphrasing Alain Renaut – would give itself the means of 'rediscovering a place at the heart of a global philosophy which is, in any case, in the process of surmounting its ancient splits and succeeding in its unification'.⁴ Less academic than institutional, this highly *consensual* response to the question 'what is contemporary French philosophy, today?' would thus have as its primary characteristic the closing of the parenthesis of 68-Thought. The modalities of this foreclosure have been stated successively in two books that have incontestably translated the forces at work in this period of restoration into philosophical terms and produced long-term effects in the whole of the French academic field.

Published in 1979 by Vincent Descombes, *The Same and the Other: Forty-Five Years of French Philosophy (1933–1978)*, was originally commissioned by a British publisher, and not just any old publisher, but Cambridge University Press, for a series called 'Modern European Philosophy'. It was published in English as *Modern French Philosophy*, prefaced by an English philosopher, Alan Montefiore, who restricted himself to recalling the project of the collection: to deepen the dialogue that was establishing itself between the analytic tradition and the European continent. Descombes concluded his opus on the stakes of the 'so-called'

(sic) philosophical discussion thus: 'in France today' (that of the 1960s and 1970s), that is to say, in his eyes, in the 'philosophy that was part of the climate of the time [*dans l'air du temps*]', the sovereign subject that one claimed to criticize had been multiplied into a 'myriad of little underlings each one attached to a perspective'.⁵ Minimally, one could argue, along with Étienne Balibar, that none of the major 'structuralist' philosophers limited themselves to disqualifying the subject: on the contrary, all undertook to throw light on this blind spot set up by classical philosophy in a founding position, that is to say, to make the subject pass from a constitutive function to a constituted position. But that is not the determining point – because the question is more political than philosophical. Who does not sense the resonances between Descombes's critique and the thesis of Daniel Bell on the individualistic hedonism of neo-capitalism (published in French translation in the same year, 1979), along with its French extension, *The Era of the Void* (1983) by Gilles Lipovetsky, which makes 1968 the year of the birth of post-modern individualism? This is a work praised by Luc Ferry as the most illuminating *political-philosophical* analysis of recent years.

Before becoming the Minister of National Education for Universities and Research (2002–04), Luc Ferry had, together with Alain Renaut, been the author of *French Philosophy of the 60s: An Essay on Anti-Humanism* (1985). This is the second work to which I was alluding. In it, our two accomplices oppose a 'post-metaphysical humanism' to what they analyse as a Nietzscheo-Heideggerian critique of the philosophical values of democratic modernity. This humanism endorses the Heideggerian thesis of the completion of metaphysics in an ego-onto-theology (understood as the closure of 'speculative philosophy') the better to justify the belated opening of contemporary French philosophy to rationalizing the defence of the conditions of reality (which one may dare to call 'empirico-transcendental'), conditioning the becoming-adult of the secular democratic universe of Western societies (thus purging it of the cultural relativism

which, between 'race' and 'history', is borne by the critique of ethnocentrism). This cannot work without the transformation of philosophy into a practical philosophy, qualified today by Alain Renaut as 'applied moral philosophy', but at the outset largely inspired by the communicational turn of Habermasian thought. As is known, the latter was able to rely on the 'pragmatic' version of the post-analytic mutation of the Anglo-Saxon tradition, the better to dissolve the last glimmers of Critical Theory in the elucidation of the conditions of universality necessary to every language. Nevertheless, the 'historicist' objections of Hegel or the 'critical' objections of Horkheimer are still valid against a linguistically reformulated Kantian ethics (i.e. *after* the linguistic turn).

Here again one discovers the dialogue between philosophical cultures matched up by a double condition. It will be enough for me to recall this double condition briefly in order to motivate my principle of negation – that which contemporary French philosophy *is not*, no more today than yesterday – by affirming that which menaces philosophy *tout court* with extinction, today more so than yesterday, on the fortieth anniversary of May 1968, which would have us believe that there is no other alternative than to choose between the 'ethical turn' (with a liberal/libertarian connotation) of which the events of May 1968 would have been the secret bearer *in thought*⁶ and the post-philosophical restoration of the most reactionary of Republican ideals. Here and there, between the ruse of reason and a reason with no ruse at all, the disaster for thinking is absolute and the profits as certain as they are complementary from the point of view of universal capitalism and the democratic-economic consensus – a consensus that Jacques Rancière is justified in qualifying as 'post-democratic', if democracy is nothing without the mode of subjectivation that animates *dissensus* – as the 'refiguration of the field of experience' of *all*.⁷

In the first place, there is the veritable watchword for the 1980s' generation: the announcement of the end of a

philosophical (and not doctrinal) history of philosophy, calling into question an authentic opening up of the history of philosophy to a becoming, animated by the excess of philosophy over its own history. The latter is what all French philosophers have practised intensively since the Second World War, between deconstruction and reconstruction, archaeology and stratigraphy, and not without attacking, much like a Deleuze, a Derrida or a Badiou, the enclosing of its teaching within the disciplinary regime of the university. But for the generation of the 1980s, the discipline of the 'history of philosophy' could only escape its analytic/post-analytic condemnation on condition of making itself *both* a form of expression specializing in the most antiquarian form of historiography *and* a form of content based on the most deterministic kind of historicism, flattening the life of concepts and their always singular *dispositifs* onto pre-selected moments cut out from and by the closure of metaphysics, assured of a permanent and outdated identity by a compartmentalized history running in a single direction. But, in truth, the conditions of the exercise of this discipline *after* the closure of metaphysics may be formulated in perfect convergence with its post-analytic practice, as follows:

1. The history of philosophy arises from the duty towards truth in general (as historical truth and scientific exactness).
2. Critique is a response to the duty of probity without any specific relationship to philosophical writing.
3. Specifically philosophical truth only exists in the research into the conditions of thinkability of any problematic fact whatever.

To which one will object by affirming precisely what is denied by this reduction of philosophy to a form of logico-social *expertise*, whose insistent affirmation without any kind of expert mediation could be valid more than ever for French otherness: namely, that the idea of philosophical truth bears within itself the always singular auto-determination of philosophy in the concepts that

it creates (beginning with the concept of truth, or the critique to which one submits it). This is supported processually by an idea of 'system' abandoning its classic modern form of the 'systematic totalization of knowledge to the profit of a 'system of effective intervals and possible displacements' (according to the highly Foucauldian formulation of Jacques Rancière).⁸ This is a system ontologically invested from the point of view of our actual becomings (the heterogenesis of the Deleuze-System), or by the fidelity to an event subtracted from the rules of the situation (according to the axiomatics of the Badiou-System), or it is submitted to the most systemic *de-ontological* and/or *de-ontologizing* critique (Derrida or Laruelle, Levinas or Henry).

In the second place (and we have anticipated this point by virtue of the logical historicism that supports it), there is above all the declared end of philosophy as a *singular zone of thinking* where 'concept and creation are related to one another' (Deleuze): because it is thought as such that is *propositionally* submitted to the intersubjective requirement of *clarity* and to control by *public* criteria without which all consensual possibility of rationality would be lost. We might say that the contemporary French antiphilosophy that we are denouncing here is nothing other than the hexagonal adaptation, inevitably mediated by a Habermasian Germany, of Rorty's idea that 'democracy [liberal-parliamentary democracy] is superior to philosophy'.

Yet we should recall its politico-institutional domination, borne as it was by the generation of the 1980s, who had the *power* to make us pass from a situation marked by the resounding statement of Jacques Bouveresse 'Why I Am So Very Un-French' to the alarm bells of Jacques Derrida five years later: 'I believe that the identity of French philosophy has never been put to the test in such a harsh way.'⁹ It is this *French philosophical otherness* that is returning, in France itself, twenty years later, under the impulse of *French Theory* and the transdisciplinary theoretical practices that it has inspired on the basis of a conceptual 'transversality' affirmed (by French protagonists on the margins of the

institution out of which they arose) the better to be negated (by the French university). This is so to the point that, in France, a *refreshing* of a style of thought now more than thirty years old can be proposed, a style of thought that has metamorphosed into 'poststructuralism', via a practice of concepts (which one re-creates rather than creates) evaluated and reanimated as a function of those other practices with which it interferes.

We could discuss the intra-philosophical interest of this 'Fresh Theory' to which I am referring (with its three hefty tomes published since 2005, at a sustained annual pace, along with the multiplication of seminars to which they have given rise),¹⁰ but not its value as a general symptom. The return of the repressed is manifest here in the form of what has been called, not without reason, an *over-politicized* image of contemporary thinking, philosophically associated with the Event-World of 1968. 'Poststructuralism', an improbable philosophical notion from a continental point of view, *historically* signifies 68-Thought – that is to say, post-68-Thought – in the paradoxical sense that it was only able to make the critical and clinical effects of 1968 reverberate for structuralism, the thinking of difference, and for thought *tout court*, by the deterritorialization of philosophy that had preceded the singular political experience of May 1968. This was a deterritorialization as much of the self-identity of philosophy, with regard to the schema of the experience of modern Reason, defined as it is by a thread stretched out between a subject and an object (or indeed in the revolution of the one around the other), as it was of its new relationship to a (non-philosophical) outside. Because this outside was working philosophy from within to the point of renewing its very meaning, it showed that philosophy, in the space of its contingencies, was not limited to the repertoire of recognizably philosophical questions, and that it could no longer simply abstract from a distribution of discourses sedimented by the existing distribution of power. Here, French philosophy discovered itself to be the *contemporary* of the putting-back-into-play of politics, by a direct

problematization of the relationship between life and thought, which would go on radicalizing itself under the sign of May and would alone be able both 'prospectively' and 'retroactively' to give meaning to the notion of 68-Thought. Failing this, the notion of such a thought remains more operative for its detractors than for the actors of an after-effect (*après-coup*) whose multiple circulations are too numerous to be reunited positively under the unifying label of a school of thought.

So, I must define this deterritorialization of the subjective and objective identity of philosophy, which bears within itself the *contemporary French* otherness affirmed by the 'long' generation of philosophy before 1968 – an otherness which thus passes through the 1960s before crystallizing in 68-Thought, and which continued to develop beyond this first plane of immanence and its institutionalized exhaustion in France, in subsequent processes, in terms of *resistance* (otherness resists because resistance of inside and of outside thought is, in a philosophical and non-philosophical sense, 'primary') and *persistence* (that is, of 're-insistence'): *the persistence of a force for rupture and experimentation*. 'Persistence' is the word proposed by Peter Hallward in his Introduction to the 2003 special issue of *Angelaki* entitled 'French Philosophy Today'. But such persistence is precisely difficult in *France* for the generation that came afterwards (from the selection and definition of the topic of a thesis, and the choice of a supervisor, both of which open up or close down the possibility of a university career even before it has started...). It can only be opposed to the *academic 'transistence'* of the reception of French thought in the Anglo-Saxon world and abroad more generally (our 'finest export'), wherein under the guise of *French Theory* it is directly or indirectly hybridized and 'trans-nationalized'. It has also been remarked that, in any case, the French generation of 1968 or post-1968 has only ever produced 'underlings of variable talent and more or less original followers' of the generation before 1968, as a result of the 'priority given to the political dimension' in the form of a 'critical orthodoxy' – the oxymoron here is *de rigueur*.

In short, 'intellectually speaking, the generation of 1968 [children included] do not possess a distinct identity.'¹¹

It is this affirmation that I wish to take up again here and develop in the direction of a brief genealogical elucidation of the *persistence of a contemporary philosophical otherness* for which 'contemporary French philosophy' up to today offers the proof, such that this otherness can and should be *philosophically* defined. This will be the occasion for a final and most philosophical variation of the figure of negation that haunts my discourse on 'What is NOT Contemporary French Philosophy, Today?' Here, 'today' designates a hyper-contemporary time that aims to shelter the difference of the now in the dialogue between continental and Anglo-American philosophical cultures, long opposed according to the division of the philosophical world into two blocs, the phenomenological and the analytic, at long last reconciled from both theoretical and practical points of view, as the adult image of contemporary thought.

The historical novel of philosophical formations

And yet... by following the principle of the deterritorialization of the discipline taken by a French philosophy rupturing the articulation of the subject-object reference (invested in opposed and hence complementary senses by the two traditions issuing from Husserl and Frege), the same story can be told very differently – to the point that twentieth-century philosophy would find a properly contemporary orientation, irreducible to its situation at the junction of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and in radical excess with regard to the chiasmus that makes us evoke the 'phenomenology' of the failure of logical formalism and the 'analysis' of the rupture of phenomenological intentionality in its Husserlian guise.

The first point to make with regard to the renewed dialogue between the positivist and phenomenological traditions, characterizing an international philosophical community and a global academic philosophy in which French philosophy is at

last taking part, is that this dialogue makes the examination of the historical novel of their formation the order of the day. It is a story oriented by the 'race for reference', for the objectivity of reference (exterior in relation to representation), supporting the project of a philosophy providing the object in the element of meaning (or 'sense'). For it is really this *finishing of Kantianism* (in the two senses of the word 'finishing', which also presides over the divergences between the two traditions) – Kantianism understood here as the making explicit of the relationship between the subject and the object in a theory of knowledge – that would determine the inaugural constitution of twentieth-century philosophy. This is a constitution that needed to 'claim the rights of the empirical at the level of the transcendental' (following Foucault's expression in *The Order of Things*) in order to accomplish the destiny of philosophy as a 'rigorous science' (according to Husserl's guiding expression) and to realize scientific rationality as the generative telos of a new humanity (according to the tropisms of positivistic intentionality/anti-intentionality).

'To claim the rights of the empirical at the level of the transcendental' means *either* that one tries to reduce all transcendental reflection to the analysis of the formalisms of the object and to the project to formalize the concrete, *or* that one seeks to uncover the grounds of possibility for all formalism, and the implicit horizon of all empirical contents, in transcendental subjectivity. An 'empirical' description of the transcendental or a 'transcendental' prescription of the empirical: it goes without saying that the 'transcendental' emerges from these disjoined coherences profoundly disfigured. However, to the extent that the reference remains here that of an object *ad extra*, which founds a common although diversely shared realist ambition, the notion of 'phenomenological positivism' given primacy by Merleau-Ponty could be a valid expression for a properly French critique engaged with this disjunction, and included in the same episteme. In this way, too, Merleau-Ponty's critique could have

been informed, at the two extremes of the philosophical spectrum – the existential and the epistemological – by Emmanuel Levinas and Jean Cavaillès.

Merleau-Ponty's critique could have been informed by Levinas's texts on Husserl and Heidegger, which condition the discovery and understanding of phenomenology in France in the 1930s (beginning with Sartre and Blanchot), starting out from Husserl's critique of objectifying representation. This led – in Levinas's *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology* (1930) – to the 'minoring' of the concept of reduction by virtue of the link between intuition and 'all the vital forces defining the concrete existence of man', confronted, in those zones of non-intentional opacity named sensibility or affectivity, with the *enigma of the invisible* constitutive of the 'phenomenon' – so many themes announcing the anti-Husserlian, Heideggerian and non-Heideggerian turning of French phenomenology. However, his critique could also have been informed by the critique of logicism attached to the name of Jean Cavaillès, a major philosopher and member of the Resistance, who was executed by the Nazis. During the years of World War II, Cavaillès denounced the *void of a radical abstraction* leading the scientific transformation of the philosophy of the positivists back to the bitterly contested aporia of neo-Kantianism. By eliminating predication anchored in apperception and the categorization of the sensory datum, the register of quantification, by definition, effectively leaves the precept of evidence and the return to things themselves with nothing to do. But then it is the *phenomeno-logical* distance that renders problematic those philosophies that appealed to the arguments either for analysis or for foundation in order to cross that distance. Recent attempts to refound cognitivism in the Husserlian *noema* are no exception to the aporia that was posed by Cavaillès in a fashion that was as rigorous as it was brutal. It is worth recalling that for the philosophical generation of the 1960s, who recognized themselves in the programme of a philosophy of the concept, this aporia effectively expressed and

denounced the real logic of a *purely logical grammar* that cannot condition transcendental subjectivity without fissuring a *priori* its constituting power. 'If transcendental logic truly founds logic, there is no absolute logic (that is to say, no logic regulating absolute subjective activity). If there is an absolute logic it can only draw its authority from itself and so is not transcendental.' From this Cavallès deduced that 'if, by separating transcendental consciousness from a consciousness inserted in the world, the *epokhe* takes away from logical empiricism and from psychologism their naïve and slightly aggressive qualities, *they remain subjacent to the development of phenomenology*.'¹² Or, as Dominique Lecourt puts it, in its rupture with the psychologism of traditional logic 'the Husserlian doctrine in its turn comes up against major difficulties which, in the final analysis, are the exact replica of those that logical positivists had endeavoured to circumvent.'¹³ This lesson, we know, will preside over the anti-Husserlian/anti-Krisis tone of the last part of Foucault's *The Order of Things*.

It is interesting to note, at the very least, that at the end of his critical traversing in and of phenomenology, Merleau-Ponty reached the same conclusion, whilst making the point that because reflexive philosophy, in the trajectory that led from Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* to Husserlian phenomenology, 'to grasp the thing in itself immediately, [it] falls back into subjectivity – And ... conversely, because it is haunted by being for us, does not grasp it and grasps only the thing "in itself", in signification.'¹⁴ From this, it can be deduced that phenomenology is itself a *naïve ontology* in so far as in it one starts from the distinction between consciousness and object. Hence it was not enough to dissolve every form of representationalism in a requirement of referentiality, semantically and tautologically (i.e. analytically) reinforced by the Fregean functional-linguistic turn, in order to escape it most effectively. It is in its understanding of this that the distance taken by *The Visible and the Invisible* with regard to the texts that precede it is marked, indebted as they were to the realism and the transcendental psychologism of

Husserlian phenomenology. This led Merleau-Ponty to announce the 'necessity of return to ontology' wherein 'ontology would be the elaboration of notions that must replace that of transcendental subjectivity, those of subject, object, meaning.'¹⁵

On the cusp of the 1960s, Merleau-Ponty laid out a field of research whose *condition of reality* – in all the diversity of procedures and the multiplicity of discordances it would induce – was to extract philosophy from the magic triangle of Critique–Logical Positivism–Transcendental Phenomenology, a Bermuda Triangle in which it had for the most part breathed ever since the nineteenth century. Its realization, however, had to deal with the reality of the *critical* observation set out by Merleau-Ponty ('the crisis has never been so radical', he stated),¹⁶ along with the multiple and contradictory necessities borne by reopening the question of ontology under a Heideggerian influence *twisted* so as to grasp a highly improbable nexus between the 'philosophy of structure' and the analysis of the 'flesh of the world' – against Sartre's *Transcendence of the Ego*. (In his 1937 article, Sartre had tied down the *impersonal field* of the transcendental in the auto-unification of an 'absolute consciousness'.) We know how it will turn out: it is ontology that will have its 'presence of Being' *deconstructed* by Derrida; *un-said* (*dé-dite*) as *Otherwise than Being* by Levinas; and *un-done* by the 'action of the structure' in the crossover between Marxism and Lacanianism (Althusser's epistemological circle). Because the critical distance from the transcendental-phenomenological and analytic-positivist traditions was not equally maintained, it was possible for some to respond to the question 'what is contemporary philosophy, today?' by opposing (with the more and more frequent possibility of combinations) post-analytic Anglo-Saxon philosophy to a post-phenomenological French philosophy. I will only remark that post-analytic and post-phenomenological philosophies (taking the latter in the rigorous sense of those philosophies at work *since Husserl but against Husserl*) are all worked on by a strange principle

of telescoping between two traditionally antinomic positions: *positivism and scepticism* in the case of Austin, Searle, Cavell and what has been called the 'sceptico-positivist becoming' of the analysis of language;¹⁷ *immanence and transcendence* in the case of those philosophers who have invested the sites that, despite himself, Husserl had opened up beyond constitutable objectivity, so as to investigate them in the name of a 'donation' that, thanks to Heidegger, had turned out to be 'absolute' (*absolute Gegebenheit*), with the suspension of the appearance of phenomenality proper to being in its pure presentness-to-hand (*vorhanden*). This can be rendered, according to the formula of Jean-Luc Marion: *so much reduction, so much donation*.¹⁸

Divested of its metaphysical ambiguity, the principle of principles stated by Husserl can in this way escape from the aporias of descriptive phenomenology by virtue of a reduction to the originary. This reduction permits the elaboration of a 'new apophansis' of the *otherwise than being*, by positing the donation-revelation of a phenomenality that is not phenomenalized in the world but in itself, in the 'invisible' and the 'unseen'. In this way, by subordinating ontology as a regional instance to phenomenology in the pure form of its deconstruction (which is not without its echoes with the Derridean project), French post-phenomenology inevitably developed a manner of *negative phenomenology* which renews the thinking of the divine Absolute that had presided, in Husserl himself, over the ultimate development of immanence in an 'auto-transcendence'. (Merleau-Ponty denounced this 'theology' of consciousness which led Husserl back to the 'threshold of dialectical philosophy'.¹⁹) In this way, there would be less a turning, a *theological détournement of French phenomenology*, than there would be an *auto-comprehension of the returning of immanence to the call of the primordial transcendence*, which had never stopped haunting phenomeno-logy. Thus, despite the apparently antithetical character of the philosophies of Michel Henry (an ontology of immanence purified of all outside) and Emmanuel Levinas (an ethics of absolute

transcendence), faith would be conceived identically as the last resort of a post-historical time, in which it becomes *practically* indifferent whether one thinks of immanence as the foundation and the revelation of transcendence or of transcendence as the calling of immanence: the religious *pathos* of phenomenology... 'The reversal of values had to go so far', concluded Deleuze at the end of his reflection on the labour of the 'mole of the transcendent within immanence itself': 'we are no longer satisfied with thinking immanence as immanent to a transcendent; *we want to think transcendence within the immanence, and it is from immanence that a breach is expected.*'⁷²⁰

Except that this breach comes from *the radical philosophical im-possibility* manifested by phenomenology with each new attempt to think donation as more originally unconditional in an endlessly expanding metaphorization, which by exhaustion and *reductio ad absurdum* brings the metaphysical and post-metaphysical Odyssey of transcendence in immanence full circle. Thus, French post-phenomenology demonstrates in its *negative* way the actuality and the necessity for new images of *non-post* (phenomenological/analytic/modern) thinking which configure, more and more frequently *from abroad*, the *reality* of 'contemporary French philosophy'.

68-thought

As 'multiple' as it may be, the first characteristic of this thinking is never to have compromised on the question of the immanence on which its *materialist* consistency and contemporaneity depend. It is for indissociably philosophical and political reasons that the 'movement' of May 1968 (in the long period of its retro-actions, still bitterly disputed today) crystallized for 'subjects' no longer sustained by a consciousness of self or any mention of an 'object', but rather *subjectivized* in a *constructive* relationship to a non-transcendent outside. The stake of this outside is the 'event' as the condition of reality of the production of the new. A non-transcendent outside: this is, of course, the point that conditions

philosophies as different as those of a Foucault, a Badiou, a Deleuze or a Rancière – with their differences overlapping in the understanding of a falsely common notion that determines so many ‘thoughts of the event’ as ‘thoughts of immanence’.

I want to name and rename this thought ‘68-Thought’ because I *also persist* in thinking that it is distributed across a spectrum whose arc of forces unfolds, materially and ideally, between the philosophies of Gilles Deleuze (with Félix Guattari too) and Alain Badiou.²¹ Between these two, the absolute antagonism of thinking is motivated both openly and more secretly by what of 1968 is still an event for contemporary philosophy. (To fully convince yourself that this is the case, you have only to read the Preface of Alain Badiou’s *Logics of Worlds*,²² where he dramatizes the opposition between a ‘democratic materialism’ – whose progressive reverse takes the name ‘minoritarianism’ from Deleuze – and ‘the materialist dialectic’.) For Deleuze and Badiou share the decision to draw the consequences of a double philosophical impossibility: the impossibility of phenomenology, definitively ‘reduced’ to the archi-aesthetic of its ‘religious’ unthought; and the impossibility of logicism as the calculating disposition in which thought no longer thinks, and a rupture with the linguistic turn (the oscillation between positivism and scepticism, the calculus of propositions and the pragmatics of culture on which the linguistic turn runs aground demonstrates this). All this is carried out from the point of view of an ontology equally distinguished from any Heideggerian or hermeneutic conception, in order to develop an *immanent thinking of the multiple* that invests to their contemporary extremes of coherence the two major paradigms in which it operates: the ‘vitalist’ paradigm of open multiplicities and the ‘set theoretical’ paradigm of the pure multiple.

Now, it is still the thought of ‘68 that will constrain each of these systems to confront its constitutive limit: the pure expressionism of the becomings of the world of which the event is the immanent consequence, for Deleuze; and the pure

constructivism of a subtraction from the world of which the event is the immanent principle, qua exception to its becoming, for Badiou. Historically overdetermined by the encounter with Guattari in the aftermath of 1968, for Deleuze it will be the constructivism of a denaturalized desire, of a desire-machine, of desiring-machines, which will assemble (*par agencements*) the expression–selection of the forces of the world by ‘cuts’ and ‘connections’ of fluxes so as to extract ‘revolutionary-becomings’. To respond on the terrain of the world to the proclaimed bio-materialism of the multitudes, Badiou’s *Logics of Worlds* will for its part apply itself to defining a logic of appearing that gives up the rigid opposition between event and situation (mediatized by a mysterious – but necessary – ‘nomination’) so as to express the existential nuances of a transformation placed in the present of a being-there-in-the-world by the subjectivating incorporation to the exception of a truth...

However, this polarization of the contemporary philosophical field, placed under the political sign of a constitutive relation to the necessities of the present, also inevitably signifies the *reactivation* and *over-problematization* of the relationship between philosophy and its ‘sensible’ other, which can no longer be simply said under the category of the ‘aesthetic’. This is because there is indeed *Discontent in Aesthetics*, as Rancière’s appraisal has it²³ – for philosophical reasons that animate the tension between the contraries of the *aesthetic* (making sensible insensible forces in a constructivist installation: Deleuze and Guattari) and the *inaesthetic* (the transformation of the sensory into the event of the idea: Badiou); but also by virtue of the sensible and conceptual ‘dis-identification’ of contemporary art. There is the risk that the latter finishes by projecting art *before* philosophy. For is it not to contemporary art that it falls today to invent, in a *spectacular* fashion, counter-narratives of the relationship between life and thought, through the restaging of a sensibility knotted to the thinkable and to the words to say it? Such a claim would validate that very descriptive-genealogical allure of contemporary

art, taken up here by Deleuzo-Rancièrian formulae that had originally aimed to express the immanence of philosophy to the description of the possibilities of a life that assures the being of what (there) is to (be) sense(d) and to be thought. These are formulae that Badiou denounces to better identify art by the univocity of its most modernist of names, subtracted from the *mélange de genres*. To complete the regression: it remains only for us to mention the phenomenology of art that exhausted itself in celebrating the 'absence opened' in the visible/invisible 'gift/donation of the sensible' of the work of art – right up to Jean-François Lyotard and Jean-Luc Nancy.

Contemporary philosophy 'after' contemporary art. This programme of research, which could *become* mine for 'historico-speculative' reasons that Peter Osborne would explain better than (but doubtless differently from) me, is not inscribed 'on the edge of the void' but on the extreme border and in a still very virtual zone of contemporary French philosophy – even when it is politically and ontologically redefined as I have tried to do today. Which is all the more reason to conclude that it concerns one of the most 'active' stakes for a *de-nationalized* and *in-disciplined* contemporary philosophy, such as that promoted by this Centre for Research in Modern European Philosophy. With a contemporaneity that is never 'given' – but that has always to be constructed to express what *matters*.

BASED ON A TRANSLATION BY ANDREW GOFFEY

Notes

- This is a revised version of an inaugural lecture for a Professorship in Contemporary French Philosophy in the Centre for Research in Modern European Philosophy, Middlesex University, delivered on 22 May 2008.
1. Cf. Frédéric Worms, ed., *Le Moment 1900 en philosophie*, Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, Paris, 2004; Frédéric Nef, *Le formalisme en question: le tournant des années trente*, J. Vrin, Paris, 1998; Claude Imbert, 'Le temps de Cavaillès', *Annali de la scuola normale di Pisa*, 2003; Michel Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Marx, Freud' (1967), in *Dits et Écrits*, vol. 1, Gallimard, Paris, 1994, pp. 564–74.
 2. Michel Serres, *Éloge de la philosophie en langue française*, Flammarion, Paris, 1997, pp. 195–221.
 3. Alain Renaut, 'La question de la démocratie dans la philosophie française', in Jean-François Mattei, ed., *Philosopher en français*, PUF, Paris, 2001, p. 373.
 4. *Ibid.*, p. 385.
 5. Vincent Descombes, *Le Même et l'autre. Quarante-cinq ans de philosophie française (1933–1978)*, Minuit, Paris, 1979, p. 218; *Modern French Philosophy*, trans. L. Scott-Fox and J.M. Harding, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1980, p. 187, translation amended.
 6. Cf. Julian Bourg, *From Revolution to Ethics: May '68 and Contemporary French Thought*, McGill–Queen's University Press, Montreal and London, 2007.
 7. Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, trans. Julie Rose, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1999, ch. 5.
 8. Jacques Rancière, 'La philosophie en déplacement', in Marianne Alphant, ed., *La Vocation philosophique*, Bayard, Paris, 2004, p. 16.
 9. Jacques Bouveresse, 'Why I am so very un-French', in A. Montefiore, ed., *Philosophy in France Today*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1982, pp. 9–33; Jacques Derrida, 'À quoi pensent les philosophes?', *Autrement* 102, 1988, p. 37.
 10. *Fresh Theory*, vols I, II, III, ed. Mark Halizart and Christophe Kihm, Leo Scheer, Paris, 2005, 2006, 2007.
 11. Marcel Gauchet, 'Bilan d'une génération', *Le Débat* 149, March–April 2008.
 12. Jean Cavaillès, *Sur la logique et la théorie de la science* (1947), Vrin, Paris, 1976, pp. 65–6.
 13. Dominique Lecourt, *L'Ordre et les jeux: Le positivisme logique en question*, Grasset, Paris, 1981, p. 225.
 14. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible* (1964), trans. Alphonso Lingis, Northwestern University Press, Evanston IL, 1968, p. 199 (Working Notes, 4 June 1959).
 15. *Ibid.*, pp. 165, 167 (Working Notes, January 1959).
 16. *Ibid.*, p. 165 (Working Notes, January 1959).
 17. Isabelle Thomas-Fogiel, *Référence et autoréférence: Étude sur le thème de la mort de la philosophie dans la pensée contemporaine*, Vrin, Paris, 2005, p. 82.
 18. Jean-Luc Marion, *Réduction et donation: Recherches sur Husserl, Heidegger et la phénoménologie*, PUF, Paris, 1989, p. 303.
 19. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Adventures of the Dialectic* (1955), trans. Joseph Bien, Heinemann, London, 1973, p. 138 n78 (*Les Aventures de la dialectique*, p. 202 n1).
 20. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. G. Burchell and H. Tomlinson, Verso, London and New York, 1994, pp. 46–7.
 21. I wrote that nearly fifteen years ago in a very official report on 'Contemporary French Philosophy', at the request of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. See *Philosophie contemporaine en France*, with C. Descamps and J. Benoist, Publications du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Paris, 1994; augmented version in *De l'impossibilité de la phénoménologie. Sur la philosophie française contemporaine*, Vrin, Paris, 1995.
 22. Alain Badiou, *Logics of Worlds: Being and Event 2*, trans. A. Toscano, Continuum, London and New York, 2009, p. 2.
 23. Jacques Rancière, *Aesthetics and Its Discontents* (2004), trans. Steven Corcoran, Polity, Cambridge, 2009.

13 The African intellectual: Hountondji and after

OMEDI OCHIENG

Every thought, however original it may be, is to some extent shaped by the questions that it is asked.

Paulin J. Hountondji, *The Struggle for Meaning*

One of the characteristic features of African philosophy is that it tends to pose epistemological questions in terms that preserve their dialectical entanglement with questions of agency. In what follows I will examine the kind of knowledge articulated and contested by Paulin Hountondji, arguably the most influential African philosopher alive, and, in particular, the kind of *habitus*¹ that Hountondji has argued must normatively proceed from a commitment to the sort of knowledge he champions. My definition of 'African philosophy', as will be clear from the discussion below, follows from Gramsci's definition of the intellectual. As Gramsci points out, whereas everyone in some sense is an intellectual, not everyone in a society has the function of performing intellectual work.² One is designated an 'intellectual' by processes of recognition and credentialling that are inflected by power relations. By 'African philosophy', then, I mean discourses produced by those interpellated as African philosophers by institutions of power such as schools, 'universities' and the media. This article will closely map the contours of Hountondji's thought as it offers a particularly fruitful starting point from which to understand the topography of African philosophical debate more generally.

Born in Abidjan in 1942 and educated in Paris at the *École Normale Supérieure* in the mid-1960s at the height of Althusser's

influence, Paulin Hountondji is one of the most lionized and influential in the African intellectual landscape. Not entirely paradoxically, however, there is also probably no philosopher who has been as much reviled within African philosophical discourse. This is largely traceable to Hountondji's confrontation with a school of thought that he has derisively dubbed 'ethnophilosophy'. Ethnophilosophers like Placide Tempels and Alexis Kagame had asserted that African philosophy, in so far as it existed, consisted in communally shared, anonymous (because collective) *beliefs*. Hountondji charged that ethnophilosophy reiterated Eurocentric caricatures of Africans as members of a herd-like mob, devoid of the capacity to think as independent individuals. His critics in turn shot back that Hountondji was a Western stooge, even a Trojan Horse for a second, post-colonial *mission civilisatrice* in the African continent.

Hountondji carved out a place in the field of African philosophy largely on the strength of his major work, *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality* (1976).³ Twenty years later he published an intellectual memoir, translated as *The Struggle for Meaning: Reflections on Philosophy, Culture and Democracy in Africa* (1997).⁴ The term 'intellectual memoir' may be misleading. The book's original French subtitle, *Un itinéraire africain* (An African Journey), offers a better description of it as an attempt to retrace and explain his intellectual development.⁵ After an initial discussion of his own intellectual inheritance and influences (notably Husserl and Althusser), much of the book consists of Hountondji's attempt to defend his work from the veritable cottage industry that sprang up in response to his critique of ethnophilosophy.

The episteme of the African intellectual

Hountondji affirms four main ideas concerning the definition and role of philosophy, all of which are intended to establish the domain in which an African philosophy might be articulated, while excluding 'ethnophilosophy' as an impostor (if not as a contradiction in terms). First, in his book *African Philosophy*,

Hountondji defines African philosophy as a 'set of texts, specifically the set of texts written by Africans and described as philosophical by their authors themselves'.⁶ Though the definition at first sight comes across as disarmingly straightforward, it in fact rests on a number of assumptions diametrically opposed to the school of thought that Hountondji dismissed as 'ethnophilosophy'. Like other critics, Hountondji traces the origins of ethnophilosophy to the work of the Belgian missionary Placide Tempels (1906–1977). In his book *Bantu Philosophy* (1945) Tempels argues that 'Africans' conceive of reality as a hierarchy of interacting forces. According to Tempels, this view of reality is held by all Africans and is attributable to the natural disposition of the African mind. The Rwandese philosopher Alexis Kagame (1912–1981) attempted to extend and refine Tempels's theory, notably in his books *La Philosophie bantu-rwandaise de l'être* (1956) and *La Philosophie bantu comparée* (1976). Kagame, unlike Tempels, argued that African philosophy emerged from a shared cultural essence, rather than an African 'nature'. This shared culture consisted in African traditions, customs and language.

It is these notions that Hountondji's definition of philosophy as a 'set of texts' seeks to challenge. The emergence of philosophy, Hountondji holds, is dependent on a dialectical or critical method which can only take place with literacy and written or 'archival' transmission. According to Hountondji,

oral tradition favours the consolidation of known into dogmatic, intangible systems, whereas archival transmission promotes better the possibility of a critique of knowledge between individuals and from one generation to another. Oral tradition is dominated by the fear of forgetting, of lapses of memory, since memory is here left to its own resources, bereft of external or material support. ... Written tradition, on the contrary, providing a material support, liberates the memory, and permits it to forget its acquisitions, provisionally to reject or question them because it knows that it can at any moment recapture them if need be.⁷

Philosophy existed in the West, Hountondji asserts, because 'the history of the West is not directly cumulative but *critical*: it

moves forward not through a mere plurality of knowledge, ... but through the periodical questioning of established knowledge, each questioning being a crisis.⁸ Ethnophilosophy, Hountondji contends, errs in naming as philosophy forms of thinking that are merely implicit and unwritten. For Hountondji, genuine philosophy renders legible and meaningful bits of knowledge into a *text* of knowledge.

Hountondji's insistence on written texts as philosophy partly hinges on his belief that texts offer some form of evidence against which duelling interpretations may be compared to determine the correct one. He argues,

The discourse of ethnophilosophers, be they European or African, offers us the baffling spectacle of an imaginary interpretation with no textual support, of a genuinely 'free' interpretation, inebriated and entirely at the mercy of the interpreter, a dizzy and unconscious freedom which takes itself to be translating a text which does not actually exist and which is therefore unaware of its creativity. By this action the interpreter disqualifies himself from reaching any truth whatsoever, since truth requires that freedom be limited, that it bow to an order that is not purely imaginary and that it be aware both of this order and of its own margin of creativity.⁹

In his intellectual memoir, Hountondji elaborates on a second reason why he opposes ethnophilosophy's claim to being genuine philosophy, one that draws on Husserl's distinction between a first-order *hyle* or matter and a second-order *morphe* or form. For Husserl, the *hyle* is the 'nonintentional' or 'primary' aspect of the mind, the stratum of thought through which sensory data or perceptual content is manifested or appears. The *morphe*, on the other hand, is the stratum of thought which relates the experience of the *hyle* to its objective correlate – that is, which confers on sensations their objectivity. In his elaboration and reconstruction of Husserl's thoughts, Hountondji argues that the *hyle* is the incipient first stage towards greater knowledge. The *hyle*, he continues,

expresses our primordial interlacing with the world, and the initial complicity that conditions any later distance that might be observed;

it expresses this place of silence where, before any enunciation and verbal expression, the configurations of our relation to the world and to others are sketched out.¹⁰

Thus, in so far as ethnophilosophy attributes to Africans an implicit philosophy, Hountondji condemns it for making a category mistake.

If we pose that it is absurd to speak of unconscious algebra, geometry, linguistics, etc. and if we accept that no science can exist historically without an explicit discourse, then by the same token we must regard the very idea of an unconscious philosophy as absurd.¹¹

Ethnophilosophy is a rank failure because of its obliviousness to the difference between first-order and second-order forms of knowing. Africans, Hountondji holds, did and do possess – as do all humans – the capacity for abstract thought. Husserl had shown that there exists a universal architectonic of consciousness. By alleging that the African's thinking was 'communal', ethnophilosophers were undermining the most basic condition of possibility for the existence of philosophy, namely the universality of individual human consciousness.

Third, Hountondji contends that philosophy designates, in its role as clarifier of scientific concepts, the privileged method for the discovery of truth. Husserl's method of the transcendental *epoché*, the bracketing of the world and the natural attitude, deeply influences Hountondji and inspires his general disdain for empiricism. For Hountondji, empiricism is mere 'psychologism'.¹² He states in *African Philosophy* that he remains attached

to a certain idea of philosophy which, since Plato, demands that it be *episteme* rather than *doxa*, science rather than opinion; to Husserl, who identifies in a very technical manner some of the intellectual devices and methods that allow philosophy to become 'a rigorous science'; to Descartes's cogito; and to all the doctrines that value intellectual responsibility and demand that each affirmation be sustained by a proof or a rational justification.¹³

One reason why Hountondji regards ethnophilosophy as something other than philosophy is because he thinks its empiricist

methods reduce it to a form of anthropology. Moreover, Hountondji's adoption of the *epoché* as a methodology also strongly influences his own intellectual habitus. It is at least partly what drives his remarkable capacity for relentless argumentation, his readiness methodically to follow a train of thought, concept or argument down to the furthest reaches of its claims.

Fourth, Hountondji argues that by making explicit the unarticulated, philosophy made possible the emergence of science. Hountondji follows Louis Althusser in conceiving of philosophical knowledge as signifying a *rupture* or break that founds a new science by a violent repudiation of subjectivism, myth and doxa. The history of philosophy, he states, 'does not move forward by continuous evolution but by leaps and bounds, by successive revolutions, and consequently follows not a linear path but what one might call a dialectical one – in other words, that its profile is not continuous but discontinuous'.¹⁴ If this signifies epistemological progress, it is no less a moral one as well. Philosophy is possible in literate cultures, he avers, because literacy 'liberates the memory'. He continues: 'Such is the real function of (empirical) writing. It leaves the task of conservation to matter (books, documents, archives, and so on) and liberates the mind to make innovations that may shake established ideas and even overthrow them completely.'¹⁵ In his memoir, Hountondji hails his critique of ethnophilosophy as marking nothing less than an 'intellectual liberation'.¹⁶ Drawing on Husserl and Althusser, he argues for a conception of philosophy as *Wissenschaftslehre*, 'a theory of science necessarily called upon by the very movement of science as realization, or at least the condition of realization of this need for integral intelligibility that permeates science'.¹⁷ Through this method, Hountondji claims, ontology could then be clarified as knowledge of a universal essence or foundation upon which all subsequent sciences can then be built: 'Therefore, there is an order of things, an objective articulation of being, a universal legality that regulates the sphere of truth. Scientific discourse must account for this pre-existing order.'¹⁸ The

ultimate goal of philosophy is nothing less than a Platonic 'duty to truth and the desire for apodictic certainty'.¹⁹

Hountondji lays out the implications of these critiques in stark terms. 'We [Africans] must relearn how to think', he states.²⁰ Ethnophilosophers, he argues, 'have not seen that African philosophy, like African science or African culture in general, is before us, not behind us, and must be created today by decisive action.' To get it started requires that the African admit that African philosophy 'is yet to come'.²¹

Controversies and polemics

In his major work, *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality*, Hountondji is prone to dismiss those he disagrees with as engaged in a discourse other than philosophy. But he does so only on the strength of his definition of philosophy as a 'set of texts'. In doing so he simply begs the question. The lack of a textual basis for ethnophilosophy condemns it as non-philosophical in advance.

Unfortunately, in the case of African 'philosophy' there are no sources; or at least, if they exist, they are not philosophical texts or discourses. Kagame's 'institutionalized records,' or those which Tempels had earlier subjected to 'ethnophilosophical' treatment, are wholly distinct from philosophy. They are in no way comparable with the sources which for an interpreter of, say, Hegelianism, or dialectical materialism, or Freudian theory, or even Confucianism are extant in the explicit texts of Hegel, Marx, Freud, or Confucius, in their discursive development as permanently available products of language.²²

What Hountondji does not acknowledge here is that the status of what counts as 'philosophy' and 'philosophical discourse' is exactly what is being debated. It's not enough to define rival discourses as not-philosophy and declare the argument won. Nor is it enough to treat the field of philosophy, oriented by a neo-Althusserian emphasis on revolutionary breaks, in terms that effectively reduce its structuring principles to a heroic clash between the ideas of Great Men.

The first thing that Hountondji fails to account for is the historical determinations that structure his own philosophical thought. In *African Philosophy* he points to the historical conjuncture of racialist supremacy and African nationalism as the impetus for the favourable reception of ethnophilosophy. What he does not do, however, is subject his own philosophy to the same contextual critique. In his intellectual memoir, when he engages the influences on him, he offers a litany of Great Men (notably Immanuel Kant, Edmund Husserl and Louis Althusser) as his forebears, and he offers his text-based definition of philosophy as superior to other definitions because he sees it as simply referencing the 'philosophical intention of the authors, not ... the degree of its effective realization, which cannot be assessed'.²³ It is a short step from here to the bald assertion that philosophy is what the writer says it is.

And yet Hountondji's work bears ample testimony to the contextual determinations that structure the presuppositions of his beliefs. There is, to begin with, a set of broadly 'modernist' assumptions that he takes for granted. My definition of modernization, drawn in part from Perry Anderson and T.J. Clark,²⁴ takes it to be a historical conjuncture marked by the struggle for self-definition of the 'professional' classes, the rationalization and bureaucratization of the life world (including processes of standardization, routinization and surveillance), and the emergence of a 'global' public sphere through the agency of mass media technologies. Modernization was of course highly variegated, and the response to processes of industrialization, mass commodification, professionalization and standardization were highly differentiated from field to field (thus what is often termed 'modernist' art and literature tended to be anti-modernizing in its thrust).

Hountondji's work is best understood in light of this historical conjuncture. Consider his portrayal of philosophy as primarily a value-free method, which goes hand in hand with his suspicion of 'engaged' subjectivity. Hountondji finds 'seductive' Husserl's argument for a science that foregrounds an 'ethics of effacement'.²⁵ In

such a science the subject abandons itself to truth, 'neutralizes itself, to be nothing more than a pure spectatorial gaze'.²⁶ The 'neutrality' Hountondji invokes in his critique of ethnophilosophy's cultural relativisms is based in presumptions he adapts from Kant and Husserl: reason is not reducible to the accumulation of sensory impressions or of cultural habits. Emphasis on the necessary and universal (*a priori*) conditions of cognition and experience, however, opens the door to a frictionless idealism: the rough ground and bewildering diversity of the empirical world are sacrificed for the sublimity of coherence and order.

Hountondji's own writing bears traces of the intellectual and ideological imprint of the Cartesian style on the modern French university. He lavishes praise on his teacher Georges Canguilhem for the 'beauty of his writings – rigorous analyses, an austere style, and conceptual rigor'.²⁷ It is a style that brilliantly shimmers in Hountondji's own prose: a pithy, impacted form of expression that is seemingly effortless in its translucence. It's a style that resonates with that ethos of objectivity so prized in our 'professional' era. But precisely because it works so hard at performing its transparency, there is at the same time an antipathy in Hountondji's work to this very performance. It is no wonder, then, that Hountondji himself is contemptuous of rhetoric, dismissing his opponents as 'rhetoricians' and contrasting his own logic to their 'rhetoric'.²⁸ The paradox, then, is that for all of his contempt for 'rhetoric', Hountondji's rhetorical style is in tune with modernity's ideology of clarity and transparency as signature strategies of distinction.²⁹

It is in the light of his modernizing allegiance to a form of transcendental idealism, therefore, that one ought to understand Hountondji's fetishism of writing and literacy. Hountondji regards literacy as essentially a neutral medium for the acquisition and engagement of knowledge. He claims that his definition of philosophy is intended to be neutral: 'I wanted to take note of the fact of [African philosophical] writings, outside of any assessment of value judgment'.³⁰ It is not a particularly convincing

argument, for his definition is structured around a series of oppositions favourable to his own position: 'philosophy' versus 'ethnophilosophy', 'critical written philosophy' versus 'spontaneous oral thought', and 'explicit' written texts versus 'implicit' oral utterances. Hountondji assumes that written texts are explicit, articulated philosophies by virtue of the fact that they are *written*. But what is written, of course, is often as implicit as what is spoken. That is, written texts are utterances which are explicit about some things, implicit about others, and necessarily rest on certain assumptions. It is therefore important to try to reconstruct how Hountondji is blind to the diverse forms of written texts and reduces them to a single manifestation: those that explicitly argue a case, generally in the form of a *book*. For Hountondji, in effect, the only philosophy is written, and the only philosophical writing worthy of the name is presented as a book. This idea of the book as a stand-in for all written texts is itself embedded within a very particular representation of the medium as inseparable from another activity, namely reading. It is not just that books are assumed to automatically possess explicit or critical *traits*, but that this can only be assumed because they confer particular *skills*. Reading is metonymic of technique, and contributes to a modernising *technicism* – the fetishization of technique and, its corollary, the sacralization of technology. However unconvincing the series of leaps required to enable Hountondji's conflation of the written with the philosophical, it dovetails with the modern state's bureaucratic function of cataloguing, measuring, recording and, not least, accrediting.

Hountondji's claims of transcendental objectivity notwithstanding, it is clear that his critique springs from a deep vein of *moral* disapproval of ethnophilosophy. If there is one word that echoes throughout his *African Philosophy*, it is 'courage'. African philosophy, he states, 'may today be going through its first decisive mutation, the outcome of which depends on us [Africans] alone, on the courage and lucidity we show in bringing it to its conclusion'.³¹ For Hountondji, ethnophilosophy was symptomatic

of a kind of dogmatic sleep of consciousness that his compatriots ought to be awakened from. As he elaborates in his intellectual memoir,

What I refused deep down was a philosophy in the third person [that] consisted in lazily taking refuge behind group thought, in abstaining from taking a personal position and from giving one's opinion on the problems to which, in its own way, this thought of the ancestors was a response. In place of this lazy recourse to group thought, I appealed for the intellectual responsibility of the thinker, of each thinker.³²

Hountondji's anger at ethnophilosophy for what he considers its extraversion – its orientation towards 'the West', its desire to prove that Africa was equal to Europe because of its own storied civilization – thus, after all, springs from a sensibility he shared with the ethnophilosophers: the quest for recognition. He dismisses the ethnophilosophical consciousness as motivated by a 'desire to show off' that 'grows increasingly hollow until it is completely alienated in a restless craving for the most cursory glance from the [Western] Other'.³³ Ethnophilosophy is thus faulted for its cringing desire for approval from the West. In the interstices of Hountondji's rhetoric, then, seeps not only anger but also *shame*. He thought that ethnophilosophy, despite its flourishes about restoring African pride, heralded another era of African abasement: 'The same subservience, the same wretchedness, the same tragic abandonment of thinking by ourselves and for ourselves: slavery.'³⁴ Hountondji's broader polemical stance betrays the burden of this shame. His country, Benin, he argued in 1972,

was characterized politically by the loss of all meaningful sovereignty, by its international mendacity, servility in its relations with great or middle-level powers, its inability to keep to its internal and external financial commitments, and its 'creepy-crawliness' and obsequiousness.³⁵

Thus, Hountondji's rejection of ethnophilosophy's attribution of African philosophy to a collectivistic *mentalité* is as much

prompted by moral scruples as it is an epistemological critique. Philosophical truth is only truth in so far as one can attribute it to individual agency. As he puts it, philosophy is produced

when every thinker, every author, engages in total responsibility: I know that I am responsible for what I say, for the theories I put forward. I am 'responsible' for them in the literal sense of the word, because I must always be prepared to 'answer' for them; I must be ready to justify them, to attest to their validity.³⁶

It is here that his notions of what it means to be an intellectual can be plumbed all the way down to Immanuel Kant. Kant, it will be recalled, defined Enlightenment in forceful terms:

Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-imposed immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one's understanding without guidance from another.... Laziness and cowardice are the reasons why so great a proportion of men, long after nature has released them from alien guidance, nonetheless gladly remain in lifelong immaturity, and why it is so easy for others to establish themselves as their guardians.³⁷

Though Hountondji's language is suffused with moral, even moralistic, sentiment, the idiom it speaks in is that of disciplinarity – an idiom, one has to remember, which is embedded in modernity's interpellation of certain classes and functions as 'professionals'. Hountondji's definition of African philosophy takes for granted the disciplinary divisions that are the norm in the modern university. He argues, for example, that

scientific method demands that a sociological document is interpreted first in terms of sociology, a botanical text (written or oral) first in terms of botany, histories first in terms of historiography, etc. Well then, the same scientific rigor should prevent us from arbitrarily projecting a *philosophical discourse* on to producers of language which expressly offers themselves as something other than philosophy. In effecting this projection, Kagame – and Tempels before him, along with those African ethnophilosophers who followed suit [–] ... committed what Aristotle called ... a *metabasis eis allo genos*, i.e. a confusion of categories.³⁸

The modernist intellectual stance that Hountondji cultivates, to use Michel Foucault's characterization, is that of the 'specific'

rather than the 'universal' intellectual. To Foucault, the universal intellectual – for example, Jean-Paul Sartre – should be and has been replaced by the specific universal – exemplified by the American physicist Robert Oppenheimer. The universal intellectual is the 'master of truth and justice', 'the consciousness/conscience of us all'. The specific intellectual, on the other hand, works 'within specific sectors, at the precise points where their own conditions of life or work situate them (housing, the hospital, the asylum, the laboratory, the university, family, and sexual relations)'.³⁹

But one drawback to this stance is that its commitment to specialization and division of labour takes for granted or offers little critique of the categories through which it analyses the world. In other words, Hountondji does not seek to explore the manner in which the analytical categories he employs and the spheres (public, private, and so on) emerged historically. Moreover, his analytical categories fail to offer convincing accounts of the connections or articulations among the discrete categories and spheres – what early Marxism referred to as totality. This articulated knowledge is conceived here as, first, a delineation of the relationships among types of knowledge: university knowledge (in the forms of *episteme*, *techne* or *gnosis*), political knowledge (in the forms of *bie*, *metis* or *praxis*), knowledge within civil society (in the forms of *doxa*, *muthos* or *kerdos*); local knowledge (*nomos*); worldly or universal knowledge (*kosmopoliteia*).⁴⁰

The first of these considerations must centre on university knowledge. The ancient distinction between *episteme* (knowledge) and *techne* (craft or art) by no means instituted an absolute separation between these two forms. Plato and Aristotle both speak of a *techne* that may be interanimated by *episteme*, though both, regrettably, privilege *episteme* over *techne*. It was largely the legacy of Descartes – who declared himself certain of no knowledge but the knowledge that he could think (which then serves as a guarantee of 'methodical' or demonstrable knowledge more generally) – that drove a wedge between the two forms.

Hountondji embraces what Pierre Bourdieu in another context termed 'logicism' – an attempt to found science on general *a priori* rules, but that in its idealism and romanticization of scientific practice falls into an idle scholasticism.⁴¹

In any case, the *episteme* versus *techné* divide, even in its ancient forms, may wrongly give the impression that different methodologies are *a priori* mutually exclusive or conflictual.⁴² Even worse, in its claim that one method is superior to another it leads to a pernicious and ultimately destructive 'arms race' for disciplinary cultural capital. Such struggles for cultural capital are not only provincial, but ultimately undermine the autonomy of intellectual practice in so far as they prevent the kind of constitutive practices – for example, disciplinary and cross-disciplinary and multi-perspectival knowledge – necessary for establishing a contextual (and therefore deeper) *rigour*.

Universities are, of course, not the sole spaces for the articulation of knowledge. Hountondji's critique of ethnophilosophy tends to conflate its 'spontaneous philosophy' with *doxa* and *mythos*. He thereby loses an opportunity not only for a more fine-grained critique of the different strains of *doxa* and *mythos*, but also the extent to which power relations are constitutive of what is legitimized as *episteme* and what is ruled out as *doxa* and *mythos*. As Steven Feierman has shown in his brilliant ethnographic study in the Shambaai, peasant intellectuals articulated a complex discourse that demonstrated a far more thoroughgoing elaboration of democratic theory and practice than the official discourse.⁴³ To be sure, the field of *doxa*, no less than that of *episteme*, ought not be romanticized. What are often described as 'civil societies' in Africa are quite often not so much shoots of 'grassroots community' activism but rather appendages of US State Department policy and fundamentalist evangelical churches' paternalism.⁴⁴

The same critique would apply to *mythos*. Hountondji's secularist commitments must stand, alongside that of the Kenyan philosopher Odera Oruka, as one of his finest legacies to

African philosophy and intellectual theory. Apart from ethno-philosophy's dissemination of the canard that Africans think as a herd, one of its most pernicious legacies was to legitimize the notion that African people are generally in the sway of religious or supernaturalist thought; indeed, that in their animism they are unable to make any distinction between the natural and the supernatural. The Kenyan theologian John Mbiti would carry on with this ethnophilosophical myth: 'African people do not know how to exist without religion', he claims; 'religion is their whole system of being'.⁴⁵ Hountondji did more than anyone, in the field of philosophy, to expose such myths for what they were. And yet, here again, it is necessary to make distinctions. It is obvious, for example, that Hountondji's thought is bereft of any sustained engagement with African art, literature, music, film and architecture. Such an engagement might have offered him a far more subtle, more complex understanding of the different varieties of *mythos*, and perhaps even tempered his grammacentrism.⁴⁶

University politics

Hountondji's eidetic bracketing serves not only to valorize the primacy of philosophy; it also functions as a firewall between philosophy and politics. For Hountondji, this was not an entirely abstract discussion. His philosophy was worked out not only within an African philosophical discourse marked by feverish contention among rival schools of thought that had deep ideological divergences, but also within the constraints of living in repressive states that demanded fealty to the ruling ideology. In his intellectual memoir, Hountondji recounts his experience of teaching in universities in Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo) at the height of the dictatorship of Mobutu. On return to his own country, Benin (formerly Dahomey), he witnessed the seizure of power by a Stalinist junta. These experiences had a lasting effect on Hountondji's view of both politics and philosophy.

The fierce exchanges within African philosophical debate in the 1970s are best understood in light of the convulsions

that were occurring in African states. Three schools were broadly discernible. The first were the traditionalists (such as the ethnophilosophers), who advocated for a reactivation of a 'traditional' African *Weltanschauung*. The major proponents of this school included Alexis Kagame and William Abraham. The second school were left-leaning nationalists. This school included Kwame Nkrumah and Julius Nyerere. The last school of thought, 'liberal' modernists like Hountondji and Marcien Towa, advocated for universal Enlightenment thought.⁴⁷

Hountondji took on the rival schools of thought with brio. In his memoir he states that one of his main purposes in the 1970s was to 'put politics in its right place'.⁴⁸ For Hountondji, the materialist thesis, as exemplified by Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, was mistaken because of the different registers in which politics and philosophy operate. He states that 'the uncontested authority of the Russian revolutionary [Lenin], a midwife of history, and henceforth, indispensable in the area of political theory and practice, did not necessarily give him comparable authority in the quite different field of speculative thought'.⁴⁹ If the place of politics was 'unity of action', the place of thought was 'free and responsible thought'.⁵⁰ To that end, and against Lenin's denunciation of idealism as reactionary, Hountondji celebrates 'the intellectual daring of Descartes who, in his quest for apodictic certainty, readily accepted the risk of madness and, through the argument of the dream, provisionally rejected all belief in the existence of bodies including his own'.⁵¹ Hountondji prefers Althusser's early conception of philosophy as the 'theory of science, or the theory of the theoretical science' to his later characterization of philosophy as 'class struggle in the realm of theory'. Oriented by its scientific vocation, 'philosophy does not merge with ideology any more than algebra or linguistics do'.⁵²

He levels the same sort of critique at Kwame Nkrumah's book *Consciencism*.⁵³ Hountondji objects to Nkrumah's notion that politics presupposed a philosophy. He finds Nkrumah's

claim that idealism favours oligarchy while materialism favours egalitarianism to be 'arbitrary':

Our political choices stand on their own feet. If they need justification, it must be political justification, belonging to the same level of discourse and not to what is the completely different (*ex hypothesi*) level of metaphysical speculation.⁵⁴

In the context within which he offered his critique, at a time when regimes such as the one he had to contend with in Benin imposed 'ideological correctness' tests on intellectuals, Hountondji's intervention was bracing and intellectually stimulating. The dogmatism of the Stalinist regime in Benin was such that it prevented an appreciation of the depth of Marx's own texts, let alone those vilified as 'bourgeois'. As Hountondji put it, 'there is a danger that the time may soon come when, in the name of Marxism, we will be forbidden to read Marx.'⁵⁵

Nonetheless, in much the same manner as he does when he reifies disciplinary categories, Hountondji consistently takes for granted the categories within which his analyses proceed. In other words, he fails to offer an account of the *relationship* of philosophy to politics, including all the political oppositions that he establishes. This is true particularly in the case of his idea of 'Africa' and 'the West [*l'Occident*]'. Hountondji's memoir states repeatedly that the main aim of his critique of ethnophilosophy was to end Africa's 'extraversion'. What this extraversion consists in he never clearly spelt out, but one gleans that it is primarily Africa's orientation towards the West; much of the intellectual work done in Africa is designed to solicit the approval of audiences in the 'West' rather than audiences in Africa. Throughout his discussion, however, Hountondji takes the existence of the 'West' for granted. In other words, he never registers the fact that the 'West' is a *political* rather than simply a natural kind.⁵⁶ It is, moreover, a specifically *modern* creation brought into being by the construction of Africa and the East as its Other.⁵⁷ Such a realization would have complicated Hountondji's sweeping claim that he wanted to 'demystify Africanness by reducing it to a

fact – the simple and, in itself, perfectly neutral fact of belonging to Africa; by dissipating the mystical halo of values arbitrarily grafted to this fact by ideologues of African identity'.⁵⁸ But this is to be oblivious of the fact that the emergence of African identity only came about for political reasons. African identity only gains coherence when understood politically – it is certainly not because of any similarity in genes, culture or even geography. In any case, it seems perplexing that Hountondji thinks of 'geography' as a value-neutral signifier. The designation of continental boundaries has always been decided by political configurations and the markers said to cut off one continent from another have not been so much 'natural' as 'naturalizing'.⁵⁹ Why should a geographical criterion be in any sense less arbitrary a foundation of identity than other criteria?

If the problem with Stalinism is its vulgar reduction of theory to politics, therefore, the problem with Hountondji's idealism is that he assumes that politics is in and of itself 'vulgar' by definition. After Kant and Husserl, Hountondji acknowledges a transcendental subject, the universal 'I think' of scientific consciousness; after Althusser, however, he dismisses the *political* subject as nothing more than an effect of structure, an obedience 'interpellated' by ideology. The account of politics it paints is monolithic, given that ideology is conceived of as singular, and, ultimately, disabling of agency.⁶⁰ It is, in other words, a mechanistic and instrumental conception of politics.⁶¹ To be sure, Hountondji is rightly suspicious of reductive accounts of intellectual work as politics by other means, and was right to dismiss Stalinist suggestions that his Parisian *agrégation* proved he was an ally of the imperialist enemy. By taking his Stalinist opponents as representatives of philosophical materialism, however, he fails to engage a much richer and more complex Marxist corpus. As Raymond Williams argues, the notion of determination bears at least two senses: 'There is, on the one hand, from its theological inheritance, the notion of an external cause which totally predicts or prefigures, indeed totally controls

a subsequent activity. But there is also, from the experience of social practice, a notion of determination as setting limits, exerting pressures.⁶²

Of the *institutional* determinations that set limits, exerted pressures on his intellectual work, Hountondji again has little to say. And yet his work through the 1970s to the 1990s in universities across Africa, in Kinshasa, Lubumbashi and Cotonou, was a witness to some of the most wrenching changes in African intellectual history. These changes were spurred by the perfect storm of 'internal' and 'external' explosions that tore through African politics during these years. In the 1960s, immediately following independence from colonial rule, many African universities were geared towards the training of civil servants for the bureaucratic behemoth that would become the African state. This period saw the growth of some of the most acclaimed universities in the African continent such as Uganda's Makerere University and Tanzania's University of Dar es Salaam.⁶³ It was followed in the 1970s by massive contractions and convulsions of the world economy just as the African universities experienced an unprecedented influx of second-generation students. As the edifices of their institutions crumbled and they began to face rapidly diminishing prospects in the patronage machinery of the state, students and faculty in the African university system were increasingly radicalized. Universities exploded into open revolt and African states cracked down brutally on faculty and students. The 1980s and 1990s saw an even greater hollowing of the African university as the world powers imposed structural adjustment programmes on virtually every African nation.

The external pressures on 'development' were clear enough. African states that wrested political independence from colonial rule in the early to mid-1960s were even more completely absorbed into the circuits of global capitalism as the reach of the market now affected the furthest encampments of the rural populace. By and large this development initially fuelled economic growth as African economies found ready markets for what

remained largely primary products (agriculture, minerals, oil), and as capital – packaged as ‘loans’ – flowed to African countries. This then changed dramatically due to two factors. Politically, the strife among the world powers led to the funding of proxy wars and *coups d’état*; in so far as narrow and exclusive African elites often had little broad-based support, they relied on ethnic and religious appeals to mobilize opinion, further exacerbating political upheaval. Economically, the global recession of the 1970s compounded the impact of internal developments. As Giovanni Arrighi noted, early economic growth in many African countries was ‘perverse’ in so far as it rested on ‘surplus absorption’ of labour into bureaucratic employment, the ‘primitive accumulation’ of ‘labour aristocracies’ and their transfer of this wealth abroad; the conspicuous mass consumption of these new labour aristocracies; and the continued reliance of African economies on foreign export markets for agricultural products.⁶⁴ After a decade of growth in many African economies, the mid-1970s witnessed a precipitous decline. The aggressive promotion of the Washington Consensus, which called for the rolling back of the state, led to the almost complete collapse of many economies in Africa in the 1980s.

It is in light of these developments that the sheer ferocity with which the ethnophilosophy debate was waged ought to be seen. Neither theoretical confusions (as Hountondji would have it) nor ideological divergences (as his rivals would have it) fully explain the stakes of the debate. The African university was being buffeted by the shrinking of its resources just as a new generation of students, its expectations now stratospheric, reached an all-time high. Hountondji’s critique was increasingly received in the atmosphere of a widespread ‘legitimation’ crisis that was as much epistemological as institutional and political.

The first ‘legitimation’ crisis was of a dominant analytical paradigm that can be described as the ‘modernization’ school. As African countries achieved nominal independence from colonial rule, this school of thought emerged touting an array of

politically liberal reforms and programmes designed to help ‘developing’ nations ‘catch up’ with North American and European countries. For example, what was little acknowledged by Hountondji was the extent to which his assumption that ‘writing’ was superior to orality was resonant with the salvational role then being attributed to ‘literacy’ programmes and modern communications technology. Daniel Learner, whose *Passing of a Traditional Society* served as useful propaganda for the US projection of power in imperialized formations, was one of the most prominent promoters of these views.⁶⁵ According to Learner, ‘the media teach people participation ... With the spread of curiosity and imagination among a previously quietistic population come the human skills needed for social growth and economic development.’⁶⁶ Hountondji’s *African Philosophy* – which echoed some assumptions of this school – was published at a time when the modernization school was on the defensive. Its core thesis was not only under attack by a rival school of thought – the Dependency School⁶⁷ – but also as the Chicago School fought to replace the state with the multinational corporation.

The second legitimization crisis was more narrowly ‘disciplinary’. The emergence of the sciences to a position of dominance in the twentieth century had severely undercut the cultural capital that philosophy had enjoyed ever since the *philosophes* toppled theology during the Enlightenment. It is telling that Althusser and Hountondji’s claim for a privileged role for philosophy tethers itself to this hegemony by proclaiming philosophy’s role as an adjunct of science. Hountondji’s fetishization of methodological ‘rigour’, hand-waving about objectivity, and voluntarist equation of ‘consciousness’ with liberation are of a piece with this reigning scientism. It is notable, however, that Hountondji’s intervention was a rearguard struggle not against science – its hegemony was secure, hence their attempt to find a niche within it – but against the social sciences: principally, economics and sociology.⁶⁸

The third legitimization crisis was political. Hountondji's pan-African claims were made in a context in which the African state's legitimacy was under 'external' attack from neoliberal institutions demanding privatization and 'internal' attack from within by a variety of groups calling on citizens to pledge allegiance to ethnic and religious associations rather than to the state. *African Philosophy* was thus widely disseminated just as there were renewed calls – often by African elites seeking to mobilize support – for a return to 'ethnic roots'. The World Bank's demands that the African states cut back on their funding of universities in the 1980s was so devastating that George Caffentzis talked of it as a policy of 'academic exterminism'⁶⁹ while Silvia Federici described it as the intellectual recolonization of Africa.⁷⁰ The result was a severe curtailment of access to institutions that were already open only to a minority; the sporadic payment of faculty wages; untenable faculty loads with overflowing classes; a mass exodus of faculty to non-governmental organizations, industries and, sometimes, universities abroad; non-existent support for research.⁷¹ The dominant ideology of neoliberalism was no less disastrous: a vulgar utilitarianism transformed the universities into factory floors of credentialling and little else.

The upshot is that Hountondji's own philosophical theory cuts deeply against his professed desires. Hountondji is right to want to seek autonomy for intellectual practice. And yet such autonomy cannot be secured through individualism and methodological fetishization. Engagement with history should be a dimension of any inquiry. Moreover, the autonomy of an intellectual field must begin from a radically self-reflexive critique of the *institutional deep structure* that is the condition of possibility of specialized knowledge.

African philosophy after Hountondji

Hountondji set many of the terms upon which the discourse on African philosophy now turns. In particular, it was Hountondji's

achievement to raise the question of the relationship between *episteme* and *doxa* and to tie it to the question of agency. There are broadly two streams of thought that have emerged in the wake of Hountondji's path-breaking work (though it is perhaps striking that such is the cliquishness of contemporary Africanist discourse that Hountondji has rarely been credited for anticipating many of the current debates within the field). The first, dominated by African philosophers primarily from the 'anglophone' countries, such as Kwasi Wiredu, Odera Oruka and Kwame Anthony Appiah, has attempted a nuanced recuperation of African *doxa* in order to help transform it into a genuine *episteme*. The second, represented mainly by 'francophone' African philosophers, such as V.Y. Mudimbe and Achille Mbembe, declare any African *doxa* lost or non-existent.

In his book *In My Father's House* (1992) Appiah is concerned to articulate a pan-African identity that is not based on a mythical racial foundation. Instead, he argues for a cosmopolitan notion of identity based on rational solving of Africa's problems. By rational problem-solving, he is referring to the abandonment in Africa of a belief in the 'ontology of invisible things', by which he means beliefs in spirits, for what he takes to be a belief in science. Appiah, like Hountondji, believes that the absence of any scientific conception of reality in Africa can be attributed to the lack of literacy on the continent. Noting the progress of literacy rates on the continent, Appiah urges what he calls the new 'generations of literate African intellectuals' to examine and analyse African traditions and produce 'new, unpredictable, fusions' of knowledge.⁷²

Even in this early book, many of the limitations that have attended much of Appiah's intellectual work are fully apparent. There are, to begin with, Appiah's Whiggish historiographical assumptions that posit literacy as a sleek vehicle towards the sunlit uplands of scientific and moral progress. He patronizingly urges African intellectuals to be tutored in the ways of the modern world: 'we [Africans] have the great advantage of having

before us the European and American – and the Asian and Latin American – experiments with modernity to ponder as we make our choices.⁷³ The implication is, of course, that other continents are modern while Africa remains ‘traditional’. But what is most telling about Appiah’s book lies in his conception of the political as essentially consisting of technical problems, as a matter for suitably educated technocrats to puzzle over and solve. Thus, there is little engagement with the historical gravity within which particular problems emerge and are contested, little understanding of the fact that many of the deep conflicts in Africa are powered by radically different *interests*, far more than by a lack of education or a simple matter of conceptual confusions.

If Appiah’s vision represents a naïve Whiggish view of progress, that of Achille Mbembe offers a radically different historiography of death, decay and decadence. Mbembe, in his widely acclaimed book *On the Postcolony* (2001), launches a series of bitter broadsides against, on the one hand, Western epistemes for their reductionist portrayals of African identities, and, on the other, nativist and traditionalist attempts at counter-discourses. He rails against various European constructions of Africa as a timeless essence, a paradoxically ‘negative non-identity’, a sign of the strange and the grotesque. Against these, Mbembe aims to ‘rethink the theme of the African subject emerging, focusing on him/herself, withdrawing, in the act and context of displacement and entanglement’.⁷⁴ At the same time, he underscores the extent to which African doxa is entangled in power and corruption:

In the postcolony an intimate tyranny links the rulers with the ruled, just as obscenity is only another aspect of munificence and vulgarity a normal condition of state power. If subjection appears more intense than it might be, it is because the subjects of the *commandement* have internalised the authoritarian epistemology to the point where they reproduce it themselves in all the minor circumstances of daily life, such as social networks, cults and secret societies, culinary practices, leisure activities, modes of consumption, dress styles, rhetorical devices, and the whole political economy of the body. It is also because, were they to detach

themselves from these ludic resources, they would, as subjects, lose the possibility of multiplying their identities.⁷⁵

Two problems have confounded Mbembe's project. The first is that for all his railing against the reductionisms of Western and nativist discourse, he himself engages in a vicious caricature of Africa and Africans. For example, he claims that his book *On the Postcolony* aims to do

justice to what J.F. Bayart describes as 'the true historicity of African societies' – that is, the foundations of what might be called their 'true lawfulness,' 'true raisons d'être' and 'relation to nothing other than themselves'⁷⁶

as if there is only one history of Africa, one reason for its being, one Africa that could be apprehended as a thing in itself. Mbembe's reductionisms run systemically throughout his œuvre. He speaks of a 'postcolony', reducing vastly differing regions and discourses to one logic; and he sprinkles his book with categorical statements about a 'postcolonized subject'. Thus, for all his claims to historicity, Mbembe's project remains rooted in an abstract Africa and an equally abstract 'African subject', oblivious to both history and geography.

Second, Mbembe subsumes agency to a gestural and quietist politics. In a gesture that is now de rigueur in the academy, Mbembe avers that he has 'tried to "write Africa," not as a fiction, but in the harshness of its destiny, its power, and its eccentricities, without laying claim to speak in the name of anyone at all'.⁷⁷ Like many a postmodernist, therefore, he thinks it sufficient to disavow any attempt to speak for any group. What Mbembe is blind to, however, is an account of the groups, institutions and socialities that speak through *him*. It may well be, in other words, that he does not speak for any group, but by failing to offer a rigorous accounting of the institutions and socio-political fields that speak through him he ends up re-enacting the myth of the absolutely autonomous, self-standing subject.

Mbembe writes very much in the apocalyptic poststructuralist mode. His sentences bristle with rhetorical flourishes, spooling

out in clause after clause of often cryptic, sometimes histrionic oracular declarations. What this conceals, however, is the extent to which his writing is almost uniformly derivative. He denounces Marxist and neo-Gramscian talk of 'resistance' and 'counter-hegemony' in favour of a thoroughly Foucauldian project of documenting African subjects as engaged in the play, pleasure and enjoyment of an 'economy of death'.⁷⁸ So intent, however, is he on rejecting binaries about 'resistance' and 'passivity' that all he succeeds in doing is substituting a new vocabulary for the old – the approved words now being 'play' counterposed to 'resistance', 'displacement' favoured against 'location', and 'entanglement' valorized instead of 'domination'.

As an articulation of an intellectual habitus, therefore, Hountondji's enlightened modernism represents perhaps one of the most attractive and influential intellectual characteristics and styles in the African context. Considered alongside its most prominent alternatives, the 'traditionalism' of a Mbiti, or the Whiggish liberalism of an Appiah, or the postmodern existentialism of a Mbembe, Hountondji's intellectual power and brilliance are without compare. And yet thanks to his uncritical belief in several fetishes of the modern intellectual – rigour, objectivity, compartmentalization, specialization – Hountondji loses an opportunity to re-examine how the documents of civilization he has rightly championed are nonetheless also documents of barbarism.

Notes

1. Pierre Bourdieu defines habitus as 'systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them.' Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice, Stanford University Press, Stanford CA, 1990, p. 53.
2. Antonio Gramsci, 'Intellectuals and Education', in *The Antonio Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings 1916–1935*, ed. David Forgacs, New York University Press, New York, 2000, p. 304.
3. Paulin Hountondji, *Sur la 'philosophie africaine'*, Maspéro, Paris, 1976; translated by Henri Evans as *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality*, Indiana University Press, Indianapolis, 1983; hereafter abbreviated as *AP*.
4. Paulin Hountondji, *Combats pour le sens: un itinéraire africain*, Éditions du Flamboyant, Cotonou, 1997; translated by John Conteh-Morgan as *The Struggle for Meaning: Reflections on Philosophy, Culture and Democracy in Africa*, Ohio University Press, Athens OH, 2002; hereafter abbreviated as *TSM*.
5. Kwame Anthony Appiah, 'Foreword' in *TSM*, p. xi.
6. *AP*, p. 33.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 103–4.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 104.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 189.
10. *TSM*, p. 24.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
13. *AP*, p. vii.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 72.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 104.
16. *TSM*, p. xvii.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. xvii–xviii.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 53.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 53.
22. *AP*, p. 42.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
24. See, for example, T.J. Clark, 'Origins of the Present Crisis', *New Left Review* 2, March–April 2000, pp. 85–96.
25. *TSM*, p. 49.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 46.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 194.
29. For more on distinction, see Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice, Routledge, London, 1984, p. 6.
30. *TSM*, p. 97.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 71.
32. *Ibid.*, pp. 189–90. In his memoir, Hountondji makes no bones about it: 'It was clear: I was a Kantian' (*TSM*, p. 90).
33. *TSM*, p. 101.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 102.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 115.
36. *AP*, p. 72.
37. Immanuel Kant, 'An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?' trans. and ed. James Schmidt, in *What Is Enlightenment? Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions*, University of California Press, Berkeley CA, 1996, p. 58.
38. *AP*, p. 43.
39. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, Pantheon, New York, 1980, p. 126.
40. The literature on these varying forms of knowledge is deep and varied. On *episteme* and *doxa*, see for example Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*. On *metis*, see Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society*, trans. Janet Lloyd, University of Chicago Press, Chicago IL, 1981; and James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, Yale University Press, New Haven CT, 1999. On cosmopolitanism, see Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, W.W. Norton, New York, 2007.
41. Pierre Bourdieu, *Science of Science and Reflexivity*, trans. Richard Nice, University of Chicago Press, Chicago IL, 2004, p. 104.
42. See John Guillory for a good critique of this view: 'Realism and antirealism espoused at the highest level of epistemological generality do not seem to me very useful positions to take in advance of specifying some way of talking about categories of objects, along with some particular object about which we would like to know. Consider what it would mean to establish in advance a realism or antirealism that

- would be equally adequate for all of the following objects: igneous rocks, God, adolescents, the color red, dementia praecox, poverty, a Sidney sonnet, desire, chaos, algorithms, dinosaurs, freedom, disability, status, C sharp minor, capitalism, gamma rays, honor, the Renaissance, democracy, race, menopause, beauty, foreigners, the culture industry, nations, grammar, mitochondria, alienation, global warming, disciplines...' John Guillory, 'The Name of Science, The Name of Politics', *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 29, no. 3, Spring 2003, pp. 526–41.
43. Steven Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals: Anthropology and History in Tanzania*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison WI, 1990.
 44. See, for example, James Fergusson, *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order*, Duke University Press, Durham NC, 2006, p. 101.
 45. John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, Heinemann, Nairobi, 1992, pp. 2–3.
 46. Hountondji's anti-mythological commitments imply not just an affirmation of science but a full-fledged scientism. In *African Philosophy*, he argues: 'If philosophy can also be of use, it is only by helping to liberate a genuine theoretical tradition on this continent, an open scientific tradition, master of its problems and of its themes, and also to the extent that it proves capable, once this tradition is established, of contributing in one way or another to its enrichment. That philosophy – that theoretical quest strictly hinged on science – will carry us a thousand miles away from the preoccupations which have inspired and shaped the myth of a so-called traditional African philosophy. It will get us far away from the metaphysical problems of the origins of the world, the meaning of life, the wherefore of death, human destiny, the reality of the beyond, the existence of God and all those insoluble problems which really belong to mythology, yet are the usual fodder of philosophical rumination' (*AP*, pp. 98–9).
 47. I do not propose these categories as mutually exclusive. They often overlapped. Many nationalists, for example, invented and advocated for 'traditional African values' in the service of their nationalist goals.
 48. *TSM*, p. 144.
 49. *Ibid.*, p. 145.
 50. *Ibid.*, p. 146.
 51. *Ibid.*, p. 145.
 52. *AP*, p. 214.
 53. Kwame Nkrumah, *Consciencism*, Heinemann, London, 1964.
 54. *AP*, p. 154.
 55. *TSM*, p. 148.
 56. Silvia Federici, ed., *Enduring Western Civilization: The Construction of the Concept of Civilization and Its 'Others'*, Praeger, Westport CT, 1995.
 57. Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick NJ, 1987.
 58. *TSM*, p. 126.
 59. Martin W. Lewis and Karen E. Wigen, eds, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography*, University of California Press, Berkeley CA, 1997.
 60. 'The whole existence of the structure consists of its effects, in short, that the structure, which is merely a specific combination of its peculiar elements is nothing outside its effects' (Louis Althusser and Étienne Balibar, *Reading Capital*, New Left Books, London, 1970, p. 189).
 61. Valentino Gerratano notes 'the strange indulgence initially shown by Althusser to the historical-materialist content of Stalin's "political science"' (Valentino Gerratano, 'Althusser and Stalinism', *New Left Review* 1/101–102, January–April 1977, pp. 110–21).
 62. Raymond Williams, *Problems in Materialism and Culture: Selected Essays*, Verso, London, 1980, p. 32.
 63. The University of Dar es Salaam was the locus for the articulation of some of the most imaginative and critical thinking on African historiography and history and historiography, not least because of its interdisciplinary and internationalist orientation. Among the celebrated international thinkers at Dar es Salaam were Terence Ranger, John Iliffe and Walter Rodney.
 64. Giovanni Arrighi, 'The African Crisis', *New Left Review* 15, May–June 2002, pp. 5–36.
 65. Christopher Simpson, *Science of Coercion*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1994, p. 10.
 66. Daniel Learner, *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East*, The Free Press, New York, 1965, p. 412.
 67. See, for example, Penelope Hetherington, 'Explaining the Crisis

- of Capitalism in Kenya', *African Affairs*, 1993, pp. 89–103.
68. Note, for example, Pierre Bourdieu: 'But I was no less strongly opposed to philosophy, whether it was the institutional philosophers who clung to the defence of the *agrégation* and its archaic syllabi, and especially the aristocratic philosophy of philosophy as a caste of higher essence, or all the philosophers who, in spite of their anti-institutional mood and, in some cases, their flaunted break with "philosophies of the subject", continued to profess the statutory contempt for the social sciences that was one of the pillars of the traditional philosophical credo – I am thinking of Althusser referring to the "so-called social sciences", or Foucault placing the social sciences in the lower order of "knowledges". I could not fail to feel a certain irritation at what seemed to me to be a double-game played by these philosophers, who would take over the object of the social sciences, while seeking to undermine their foundation.' Pierre Bourdieu, *Science of Science and Reflexivity*, trans. Richard Nice, University of Chicago Press, Chicago IL, 2004, p. 104.
 69. George Caffentzis, 'The World Bank and Education in Africa', in Silvia Federici, George Caffentzis and Ousseina Alidou, eds, *A Thousand Flowers: Social Struggles Against Structural Adjustment in African Universities*, Africa World Press, Trenton NJ, 2000, p. 9.
 70. Silvia Federici, 'The Recolonization of African Education', in Federici et al., *A Thousand Flowers*, p. 19.
 71. See, for example, Megan Lindow, 'African Universities Face a Looming Shortage of PhDs', *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 12 May 2008; also Silvia Federici, 'The Recolonization of African Education', p. 19.
 72. Kwame Anthony Appiah, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1992, p. 134.
 73. *Ibid.*, p. 134.
 74. Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, University of California Press, Berkeley CA, 2002, p. 15.
 75. *Ibid.*, p. 128.
 76. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
 77. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
 78. *Ibid.*, p. 115.

14 **Andeanizing philosophy: Rodolfo Kusch and indigenous thought**

PHILIP DERBYSHIRE

The belated English translation of Rodolfo Kusch's *Indigenous and Popular Thinking in América* (originally published in Spanish in 1970)* introduces this Argentine author to an English-speaking audience for the first time. What makes his work interesting is that it takes indigenous thinking seriously as philosophy – that is, as a contribution to truth rather than myth. Kusch refuses the default setting of anthropology, where the thought of the other is a local mapping of the world; rather, he sets out the truth claims of indigenous thinking and uses them to provide a critique of a tradition he regards as epistemologically erroneous and ethically dangerous. In this sense, indigenous thinking lies on the same conceptual plane as European thought and is coeval with modernity rather than belonging to a superseded epoch. Whilst such strong claims may turn out to be problematic, they provoke serious thought about the relation of European thought to its supposed Others and what emerges from their encounter.

The book arrives under the auspices of Duke University Press's 'Latin America Otherwise' series, with a ringing endorsement and long introductory essay by series general editor Walter D. Mignolo, who claims that Kusch 'relat[es] mestizo consciousness and border hermeneutics' and that his work is 'deeply illuminating' of Du Bois's "double consciousness" and Anzaldúa's "mestiza consciousness". Kusch thus appears in English assimilated to Mignolo's own project of 'border thinking'. His translators make the claim that Kusch offers not merely a critique of 'the logic of

control' that underpins Western thought but the possibility of another 'more organic' logic from which to reconstruct a sense of community as opposed to 'ideology-bound' forms of 'building collectivity'. Kusch, like Cherie Moraga, the thinker of Chicana consciousness, recovers a 'form of thinking rooted in América', a form of living that is 'body to body collective activity that pulls the cosmos towards a renovation of life understanding of identity [sic]'. Kusch, then, is placed in a new genealogy of 'border thinkers' and seen as the herald of 'liberatory, non-reformist, de-colonial, intercultural' activity. The translation becomes instrumental to a politics whose main site of enunciation and reception is the US academy, and in the process the complexities and particularities of Kusch's writing – especially his own misreadings and misprisions – are overlooked and the rifts of his thought are sutured or ignored.

Arguably, then, there is a tension between text and appropriation, in part facilitated by the decision to translate this volume of Kusch's work first, which leaves its antecedents and development slightly obscure, despite the long introductory essay. And, of course, the very belatedness of the translation means that Kusch's singularity looks like the now-commonplace strategies of post-colonial critique and puts his work in the shadow of a much more articulate discursive production on and from the Andes.¹ Though the translation is serviceable, its occasional errors and general awkwardness also make already difficult thought less accessible to critical reflection. Nevertheless, Kusch's work should be read as a contribution to a transculturation of philosophy and 'thinking' and the construction of a wider surface of comparability. The current attempt to construct a form of politics in Bolivia that engages indigenous conceptions of the social demonstrates the stakes and risks of such a mobilization.

This article frames the book via an account of Kusch's context and earlier thought that stresses his debt to Heidegger. It goes on to outline the arguments and claims of *Indigenous and Popular Thinking in América* and raises what I see as the main problems

with Kusch's approach. Finally, it offers a critique of his conclusions and some further reflection on Mignolo's appropriation of the text.

Backtext

Rodolfo Kusch was born to immigrant German parents in Argentina in 1922. He was educated as a philosopher, graduating from the University of Buenos Aires, but subsequently worked as a psychologist before undertaking anthropological fieldwork in northern Argentina and Bolivia – perhaps the most significant encounter of his intellectual life, whose fruits emerge in his extensive writings over the next fifteen years. His work and commitment to the *pueblo* did not endear him to the dictatorship that came to power in the coup of 1976, and (like many) he chose internal exile, in the northern province of Jujuy, in Maimará, close to the Bolivian border, where he died in 1979.

Kusch belongs to an intellectual generation marked by dissatisfaction with the state of Argentina – its politics, culture and way of life – that would lead many to Peronism and nationalist populism. Others would follow another Argentine tradition to seek solutions to this felt crisis in Europe and its various ‘-isms’; still others would see salvation in the pop culture of North America; and a few, like Oscar Masotta, would combine such various allegiances in serial or contradictory assemblages.² Kusch expressed his dissatisfaction philosophically by a rejection of the central figures that had come to mark the Argentine philosophical tradition. In a reflex common across the cultural field, Argentine philosophy is marked by importation of paradigmatic figures, both minor and eccentric – Ortega y Gasset and Count Keyserling – and major – Heidegger and Sartre. These add to a native tradition of positivist naturalism that had been consolidated in the early development of psychology and sociology in the work of Ingenieros and Ramos Mejía (itself perhaps pendant to the work of Taine and Spencer). Kusch characterizes this tradition as ‘academic’, even as the work of Heidegger and Sartre

provide him with his definition of philosophy as 'the phenomenology of the everyday' and his emphasis on the non-separation of philosophy from everyday life echoes the vitalism that informed the Argentine field with the dissemination of the work of Max Scheler (the most translated European thinker in 1940s' Argentina). The crisis of mid-century Argentina could not find an internal resolution: its solution had to be found elsewhere and Kusch is unusual within Argentina in turning to the indigenous cultures of America to provide the wherewithal for diagnosis and cure for the cultural malaise of modernity.

There was no important indigenist tradition in Argentina,³ in large part because Argentina had not been home to complex urban cultures prior to the Spanish Conquest of the kind whose material and ethnological legacies provided the basis for the cultural politics of post-revolutionary Mexico and 1920s' Peru (although the Inca polity had extended south of modern Bolivia into the mountainous north of Argentina). What indigenous cultures had been present in the national territory had been acculturated early (in the North) or been the object of campaigns of extermination in Patagonia and the Chaco. The 'indigenous' had been assimilated to 'barbarism', the antithesis of civilization, in a long tradition initiated by the work of Sarmiento. As Kusch himself observed, 'to be an indigenist in Argentina is mad'. So, when he first engaged with 'the indigenous' in his 1953 essay 'The Seductions of Barbarism', there was a sense of blasphemous profanation of national self-definition. This already grants him a singular importance in an Argentina that saw itself as a part of Europe misplaced on the American continent.

In turning to the indigenous, Kusch revisits and revalues the world-historical event of the conquest and the incorporation of America into the European domain. Here he parallels the narrative of 'first modernity' developed by Enrique Dussel, where the space and peoples that now denominate Latin American are seen as having been central to the very definition of Europe as a subject.⁴ The 'otherness' of the cultures of the Americas provided

a problematic difference whose subordinate accommodation within the imaginary of Renaissance religion, science and politics constituted both the identity of Europe and the categorical framework that it deployed in its ordering of the world. The moment of conquest marks the emergence of anthropology and its ambivalent relation to its objects, but also the transformation of anthropology into a philosophical universalism for which differences become moments of the same. The great inquiries into indigenous beliefs undertaken by the sixteenth-century friars had as their aim the understanding of native religion the better to combat and extirpate it. The histories and genealogies that were drawn up had a functional aim of governance and control, even if such texts always allowed for resistant dissemination.

For Kusch, the return to anthropology allows a dismantling of the universalist claims of philosophy: the encounter with the repressed and negated in the form of living others permits him to offer a critique of European categories. In part, this is only possible because for Kusch the conquest and incorporation were incomplete: America is a riven continent. This division is expressed topographically: the urban is the site of the European and is marginal to a predominantly rural continent. Similarly, an upper rational stratum covers irrational depths. The journey from one to the other, the anthropological journey *par excellence*, is itself philosophically productive. The account of such journeys then becomes the privileged locus of philosophical work, and the staging of these trajectories and encounters is a central moment of the rhetorical construction of his essays. This maintenance of concrete distance, difference and spatiality distinguishes Kusch from Lévi-Strauss, whose re-encounter with the Latin American other (notably in Brazil) folds back into a new universalism, an abstraction that reconstructs European thought but confirms the subalternity of the 'primitive' moment (its materiality) as mere instance. For Kusch, the content of indigenous thinking, and not merely its form, has truth value.

Vulnerable

Indigenous and Popular Thinking in América first appeared in Mexico in 1970 and is one of the central works in Kusch's oeuvre, along with the as yet untranslated *América profunda* (1962), *La negación en el pensamiento popular* (1975), *Geocultura del hombre americano* (1976) and *Esbozo de una antropología filosófica americana* (1978). It illustrates his methods and concerns as well as the central problems with his work and with what we might call his philosophical style. What object is he constructing under the heading 'indigenous and popular thinking'? And how does he do it? What does he think this thinking as? And how does his thinking express or transform what he is thinking about? The enmeshment of his own thought in what he would endeavour to escape from brings him close to the twentieth-century tradition of anti-philosophical philosophy.

His first significant essay, 'Seductions of Barbarism' (1953), is diagnostic, addressing the spiritual malaise of America,⁵ the 'neurasthenia' brought with the city. The cause of the malaise is the 'scission', the split that rends and troubles the region, detaching consciousness from the land. 'The indigenous' is the other of the urban consciousness that inhabits the 'fictional' city. In Kusch's essay it has a phantasmagorical air, designated as 'vegetal' and 'demonic', a principle of rootedness or a 'social unconscious'. It is illustrated by Aztec and Maya motifs – most saliently the Mesoamerican figure of Quetzalcóatl – and Kusch's use of archaeology is often clumsy. The 'indigenous' is a cipher, a derivative abstraction rather than a real presence. Most problematically, culture is racialized: the 'indigenous' persists in the *mestizo*, the bearer of popular consciousness who is determined by the biological inheritance that allows him to be a return to pre-Columbian categories. This biologically transmitted demonism is then deployed as an explanatory principle to account for a 'deep history' of America. Sarmiento's hierarchized binary, the two traditions of America, civilization and barbarism, is inverted. In this philosophy of history, the 'indigenous' is a ground for

renovation – a site of potential – which exists biologically in the *mestizo*, who is the potential subject of a new authenticity beyond the artificiality of the colonial and post-colonial forms of America. Barbarism identified with the rural masses is the positively valorized ‘law of the earth’ that returns after repression by the Conquest.

In this early essay, we can see the constants of Kusch’s thinking: the unsatisfactory state of Argentina now written as the problem of Latin America; the possibility of a redemptive transformation; the bearer of redemption as the indigenous or popular other. If any desire informs the work it is a desire for wholeness, another constant that finds here an organicist expression in botanical metaphors. Later this yearning for the absolute is articulated ontologically. But the status of the subject in all this is problematic. ‘Indigenous’ is not *prima facie* equivalent to ‘people’. The ‘Indian’ has a particular historical and cultural referent, whereas the ‘people’ emerges from the complex discourse of post-Independence nationalism and critical populism. But this ‘people’ is only crudely definable in ethnic or racial terms, and the connections between ‘indigenous’ and ‘popular’ (in the sense ‘of the people’) are opaque, buried in the claim of biological inheritance and the centrality of the racial category *mestizo*. It is Kusch’s lived encounter with Andean culture that inflects this biologism in a culturalist direction, even if it never suppresses it. The indigenous subject takes on concrete form through the documentary writings of post-Conquest Peru, in the work of Guaman Puma and Santa Cruz Pachakuti Yamqui,⁶ and in the everyday world of the Bolivian highlands. The generalized ‘native’ of this first essay takes on a specific cultural form in *América profunda*, the Andean, but this always risks becoming paradigmatic of all American or non-European forms. Most signally, a radical topographical difference gives way to common existential experience that is lived in contrasting ways.

In *América profunda* Kusch outlines a schema of cultural development (‘an epic of consciousness’ in a later formulation)

that bears striking parallels with Adorno and Horkheimer's 1944 *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. The foundational experience of both European and Andean subjects is *desamparo*, vulnerability before nature. The difference that marks out their respective stances towards the world is a difference of the conceptual and material work done to manage that vulnerability. Europe, here seen as the urban civilization whose epitome is imperial Rome, produces a subject detached from a world constituted by objects: vulnerability is overcome by mastery of the external world made objective. The American subject, on the other hand, remains within the world, endures that vulnerability through a ritual invocation of its potential opposite, shelter: the subject is passive, a moment of a wider process. These differential responses are contrasted ontologically: the European subject is, in the sense of being someone (in Spanish *ser alguien*); the American subject is, in the sense of being in a place (in Spanish *estar*). The primary experience of the 'wrath of God', the terror in the face of nature, is transformed in the first case into 'the wrath of man' and becomes a moment of domination and aggression. In the second case, 'wrath' is placated by ritual and becomes transformed into the basis of fecundation.

These differing responses to a primordial vulnerability have massive historical consequences. The European subject becomes a nomadic agent of conquest reproducing the split world of primary separation. As self-subsistent yet dependent on the objects it manufactures and dominates, a slave one might say to its own *techné*, it can travel, but it can only reproduce the same world: it is never rooted in a particular terrain; its being is universal but empty. Its problems are soluble by the manufacture of more objects or by the exercise of power on the world. The American subject by contrast inhabits a world and a terrain; its being is specific and full, but also at risk. The dangers of the world are not overcome by a manipulation of the world but by a bringing of the world (and, importantly, the god that is immanent within it, both chaos and fecundity) within the subject,

aligning subject and world in a harmony that will guarantee fertility and abundance.

Kusch's ontological distinction here has uncanny echoes of Adorno and Horkheimer's characterization of instrumental reason and the notion of mimesis. But whereas for Adorno and Horkheimer, the (Hegelian) subject has only its own internal moments as resource for overcoming its diremption, Kusch's different subjects encounter each other in a moment of dialectical fusion: *phagocytosis*, a term that plays a central role in *América profunda*, only to vanish in the later work. The subject of domination, *ser alguien*, is 'phagocytozed' by *estar* – that is, absorbed by its other into a new, fecund, integrated whole. The biological metaphors – phagocytosis is a process by which one cell absorbs another – continues the organicist thinking of 'Seductions of Barbarism' but also suggests the way the ontological split will be overcome at the level of corporeal reality. The power imbalance of European domination is not confronted directly but undermined by a slow and steady infiltration, transforming the subject of infiltration in the process. Kusch does not simply valorize *estar* against *ser alguien*, but suggests that the two modes of being are two halves that do not make a whole. Rather, some form of dialectical 'reintegration' is necessary – and it is the destiny of America to provide the lead in this new form of community. Here we have a fusion of three lines of reflection: the implicit teleologies of Hegel (the self-alienation and self-reappropriation of spirit as the trajectory of history) and Jung (the notions of mandala and 'integration' mark the traces of the Swiss psychoanalyst) and the urge to unity and complementarity that are seen to mark Andean culture.⁷

The consciously anti-revolutionary status of 'phagocytosis' should be noted. Although it could be read allegorically in a quasi-Maoist fashion, with the countryside enveloping the city, phagocytosis is differentiated from the violent revolution that Cuba was suggesting as the cure for social ills. Anti-Marxism features as another constant in Kusch's thought.

Indigenous and popular

América profunda reflects on a seventeenth-century text by Santa Cruz Pachakuti. In *Indigenous and Popular Thinking in América* the sources are more varied: fieldwork in Bolivia yields numerous encounters which are deployed against readings of classic post-Conquest narratives and interpretations of archaeological material at the Bolivian site of Tiwanaku. The form of reflection becomes more discursive, almost deliberately abandoning the standard logic of presentation and development. Here there might well be an internal mimesis of his object. At one point Kusch says of Guaman Poma's work that the 'indigenous flavour is to be found in the lack of both clarity and syntactical co-ordination in the text' (113). The antagonism to normative philosophy becomes more pronounced, reflecting a deeper engagement with indigenous categories and the life of the Bolivian *campesinos*. But the form of the text perhaps also expresses a felt anxiety about Kusch's own position 'in between', since his existential project is a form of self-undoing via the other and his writing is the means by which he achieves it. It is not addressed to that other, but rather to his *similars* in the city. Much of the rhetoric of the book is characterized by doubt and a reflexive unsureness about its own speculation. Most signally, it is clear that Kusch cannot speak Aymara or Quechua. His is a text in Spanish that relies on translations by others (the great colonial dictionaries) and addresses a Spanish-speaking audience. In the classic sense of Cornejo Polar, Kusch's work is heterogeneous; that is, it speaks of cultural objects made by one group in a language alien to that group and aimed at a third audience.⁸

Kusch's focus on thought or 'thinking' means that he presents the defining (and symptomatic) contrast in America as that between an implicit thought lived in the street and the *campo* or countryside, and a formal, reflexive thought constructed in the academy. Clearly, indigenous and popular thinking is not the thinking of the academy. The latter is a function of an imported conceptualism that responds to a historical necessity found

elsewhere. Kant and Heidegger are expressions of the experience of the European middle classes in determinate historical periods. The experience of America is other and can only be badly translated through the language of philosophy. Instead we need to turn to the languages that describe American experience *in situ*: Aymara and Quechua for the regions that provide Kusch with his existential impulse to transcoding philosophy. For example, the Aymara term *utcata* provides an understanding of lived reality as 'mere being' but 'linked to the concept of shelter and germination', an understanding that is more apposite to the experience of America than (Kusch's example) *Dasein*, which reflects the diminished being of the German bourgeoisie. Here, then, European thought is provincialized *avant la lettre*, its universalism returned to its local particularism.

Thought is again split between two forms of subject. The first, the European, has a relation to the world that is one of knowledge and instrumentality: the threat of nature is overcome by its manipulation as problem. As Kusch puts it: 'the end of knowledge is solution'. The world is analysed and then recomposed according to the principle of causality. The second subject, the Andean, seeks salvation. Here knowledge is closer to ritual and implies a form of augmentation, whose term in Aymara, *yachacuni*, brings it near to sowing and germination. In the first case, knowledge is the rectification of a problem, a dysfunction. In the second case, knowledge is an expansion, a moment of fertility. These contrasting modes of knowledge indicate a relation to what might be termed propositional truth. In the first style, the subject is not implicated in the assertion of a proposition about the world: truth is external. In the second, the proposition includes the subject who utters it: the world it refers to has the potential to destroy the subject. So we have a causal thinking that entails a reduced manipulative subject, and what Kusch calls a 'seminal thinking' that implicates the subject in the threatening but fecund world. These styles of thinking are associated with respective cosmologies. The 'disenchanted' or 'enlightened'

world of 'evaporated' being is dominated by causality; the 'mythic' world that is 'stretched between the Teacher of Being and the Chaos of Non-being' is infused by seminality. But the urban world of manufactured objects is haunted by the absence of the second modality of thought: for Kusch, a stunted, undeveloped or infantile version of seminality is present in the drive to solution – a frenzied production and manipulation of objects is a displacement of a drive for an internal transformation.

This leads to a stress on what might be described as the existential moment of being (in Spanish *estar*, one of the two verbs 'to be'), the modality of being that characterizes the Andean world, against the mode of being of the urban subject. *Estar* is to be exposed, to experience the *así* (the 'thatness') of the world, the contingency that the world is at all. *Estar* turns out to be the place of a clearing where the two forms of thinking – causal and seminal – intersect and offer a potential reappropriation of the absolute. Heidegger is invoked as the European thinker who saw the importance of *estar* but who gets its value wrong: the Heidegger of *Being and Time* remains in thrall to the Greek metaphysics of being and evades the issue of the inadequacy of *ser* by rushing to a frenzied activity marked by the centrality of time. There is an inauthentic *estar* which is mere survival (the figure of Agamben's 'bare life' is not too distant) and an authentic *estar* which is akin to dwelling.

The providential absence of industrialism is just what gives the space for *estar* to elude the fate of 'enterprise': 'Latin America is a world without an Industrial Revolution, at the margins of the West.' *Estar* – even though a Spanish term and hence in Kusch's historical linguistics a creation of the Spanish 'people' who sought to distinguish realms of 'being' – takes up a possibility of existence that is characterized by the term *pacha* in Quechua. The primordial moment of exposure is a disclosure of the unnameables that bound the cosmos. The space of *estar*, then, in its non-degraded mode, entails a demand on the world for fullness, a longing for completion: the sense of the absolute,

which is the unity of opposites, the totality that just is (beyond *ser* and *estar*?). The rip in being which is the space of *estar*, lived either as dwelling or dispossession, is only tolerable through seminal thinking.

The ethical seriousness of Kusch's project can hardly be gainsaid and the recuperation of a devalued cosmo-vision is to be endorsed. But the problems of his methodology are perhaps more obvious now than when his work first emerged, and the philosophical work he does has its own difficulties.

First, as indicated above, the category 'indigenous thought' has a shifting aspect in Kusch's work. The tendency to construct a homogeneous notion that makes continent-wide cultural productions expressive of some fundamental existential stance – where Mexica, Maya, Andean and Amazonian forms all reflect a fundamental *estar* – would now be seen as deeply problematic. On the one hand, the real differences between, say, Mesoamerican and Andean forms are occluded (the profusion of Mexica 'gods' against the abstemious and austere personae of Inca theology) or are reduced to surface phenomena of an underlying relation to nature. On the other, the characterization of the Inca polity as governed by an urge to equilibrium is deeply mistaken. Such a characterization can hardly account for the extraordinary dynamism of its last century, its expansion across the length of the Andes and its relation to history and religion, as it retold the genealogies of dominion and the configurations of the sacred. Nor can it make sense of the transformations of the land that are an integral part of Andean society: solutions might have symbolic overcodings but irrigation systems and mountain terracing are nevertheless solutions to real problems of resource management. This leads Kusch to ignore the power systems of pre-Conquest America – either refusing to engage with any analysis of Inca modes of rule through consciously manipulated symbolic recomposition or the 'biopolitics' of population transfer, or claiming that inequalities are a function of a legitimate preference for a 'seminal' economy over leftist 'causal' reform.

A tendential idealization is the obverse of a staunch critique of progress and modernization.

Second, the status of post-Conquest accounts of Andean belief is much more problematic than Kusch allows. Recent scholarship on the work of Guaman Poma and Santa Cruz Pachakuti points out how complex a weaving of Andean and Christian elements is involved in their production. Rather than being univocal texts that can be read transparently, they are rather semantically ambiguous essays in their own right, testing the limits of permissible equivalence between native and European designations, collocating patterns and motifs, eliding material that might have been considered 'idolatrous', and so on. Written when the effects of the Counter-Reformation made self-invigilation a more urgent requirement for indigenous writers (whose purpose in writing was anyway tied up with the demands of evangelization), the texts are neither simple statements of native belief, nor fully accomplished syncretic productions. They are complex negotiations of what it is possible to believe and assert, products of an active dialogue by the subaltern.

And this perhaps is also true of the vernacular materials that Kusch adduces as supports for his reading of the 'indigenous'. Elements of a pre-Conquest belief system might survive in the logics and stances of Kusch's native informants, but they may also be testimony to complex changes over time. There is a presumption of stasis, the persistence of the residual, which places the indigenous subject where he is later to be found.

Third, there is the problem of Kusch's binary thinking, his drive to produce antithetical accounts of clearly differentiated subjects, whose totalized homogeneity at the level of theory belies the posited practice of phagocytosis or *estar siendo*, the later 'unity of opposites', and requires persistent rebinarization. On the one hand, he overlooks the ways in which his European subject arrives at moments of critique and rearticulation that echo his own critical alternative, and, on the other, he ignores the ways in which 'causal' thinking is at work in indigenous practice.

Kusch is clearly indebted to Heidegger in characterizing differences of culture as differences of being, and for thinking of these differences as having authentic and inauthentic modalities. Whereas the *Dasein* of *Being and Time* attains authenticity in resoluteness towards death, for Kusch this moment of Heidegger's thought merely reflects the attenuated being of the individual caught up in German industrialization. Yet Heidegger himself comes to abandon this form of thinking Being on the basis of *Dasein* and sets out on a critique of technology and 'calculative' thinking, himself posing a redemptive other form of thinking in what is usually translated as 'meditative' thinking (*Nachdenken*). The latter is a form of openness to mystery, and 'releasement towards things' that leads to a new ground, which, citing Hegel, Heidegger sees as the source of a new rootedness and fecundity.⁹ Despite Kusch's animadversions, then, later Heidegger, the paragon of causal thinking, arrives at something like seminal thinking.

On the other hand, notions of causality are surely at work in the extraordinary taxonomies and accumulation of empirical data in ethno-botany and herbal lore that were part of the armament of traditional healers. Illness might well be a disturbance of health and wholeness, but restoration of health involved specific measures requiring agents and the manipulation of objects. Kusch needs the binaries, but they always threaten to collapse or mutate, and indeed his whole project is that they should. Yet it is arguably the diremptive moment that endears him to Mignolo.

Coloniality and beyond

For Mignolo, Kusch exemplifies a form of thinking that is not philosophy, which for him is tainted with the power-knowledge mechanisms of coloniality. Mignolo wants to suggest that engaging with the thinking that was subalternized during the expansion of Europe in the Americas allows thought to escape that coloniality in a way that critique from within 'Western thought' cannot. So the critical thinkers of the West – Derrida,

Foucault, or earlier Nietzsche and Marx – are limited by deep structural ontological commitments premised on colonial forms of power. Only a thought outside has a hope of offering a place to think. Mignolo makes a number of claims about coloniality, which he understands (after Aníbal Quijano) as the condition of the world produced by the great expansion of European empires from the fifteenth century onwards. Coloniality is not merely a form of rule or exploitation, the construction of subjects of power and accumulation. It presupposes a set of epistemological relationships: not merely the subject and objects of knowledge, but the form of knowledge imposed upon the colonized spaces are linked with the colonial project of subordination and exclusion. His famous example is the way in which alphabetization of the Indian languages translates a form of knowledge – analytical and causal – into cultural forms that have other ontological and epistemological commitments.

Coloniality is the central mechanism by which a unified Western subject is produced by social and epistemological elimination (of Islam and Judaism in Spain at the perceived inception of modernity) and homogenization (more problematic, but work done on knowledge to render it serviceable for the project of domination). Coloniality always reproduces the site of origin of history, again subordinating other histories to a claimed universal narrative: so the histories of the Andes or Mesoamerica (Tawantinsuyu and Anáhuac in Mignolo's slightly suspect hetero-imperialist renamings) as told from the point of view of their inhabitants are reduced to superseded anteriorities of the Conquest. The encounter in Tenochtitlan or Cajamarca always has a European point of view. To evade this 'monotopism' it is necessary to shift focus and to speak *à partir de*, from another positionality, the border, the place where the hold of coloniality weakens, where another thinking occurs. Hence Mignolo's endorsement of Kusch's project, or at least his reading of it: he sees Kusch as an example of 'mestizo consciousness', attempting to think *à partir de* indigenous thought, even as he remains grounded in immigrant European

thought (German thought in America is not German thought in Europe, he observes). His claim is that Kusch does not understand the *mestizo* biologically, a claim I have already disputed. Mignolo also elides the problem of the relation between 'indigenous' and 'popular' by making the 'popular' *mestizo*, but without clarifying the particularity of its content.

In Mignolo's introduction to *Indigenous and Popular Thinking in América*, the great nineteenth-century Argentine poem *Martín Fierro* is posited as a form of *mestizo* writing: Mignolo claims Kusch's reading of the poem as a 'paradigmatic example of border thinking'. However, this precisely evades the question of the ways in which the poem is an imaginative recuperation of a devalued form of existence and its subordination through a certain positivist capture of territory and subject. In the second part of the poem the gaucho Martín Fierro voices the form of law and the substance of positivist naturalism, even as he 'conquers' the black representative of 'barbarism'. What this foundational work of both the Argentine state and Argentine literature actually exemplifies is a complex and unstable space of articulation and dialogue. Mignolo's reconfiguration of the term *mestizo* remains in thrall to a biologism and to a certain homogenization, just as his history itself performs the epistemological operation of unification that he claims is enacted by the Western subject.

If Mignolo refuses the heterogeneous nature of Western thought (in part for the worthwhile aim of re-engaging with subordinated forms of knowledge), then he also homogenizes the heterogeneous forms of non-Western societies. Kusch's idea of the seminal economy is made universal and Mignolo characterizes all of 'the connected part of the planet' and the Andes and Mesoamerica as operating within its terms, save for the 'market economy' of the imperial West. Now this seems close to an economic Manicheism, both occluding the particularity of the Americas and denying the dynamic market forms of Ming and Qing China.¹⁰ Mignolo's 'grand narrative' seems to enact a horror of complexity even as he invokes its necessity.

As Mignolo's work has become more radical over the years (compare his more nuanced account of Kusch in his 2000 *Local Histories/Global Designs*),¹¹ he has come to find the constraints of Western metaphysics even more powerful. The rejection of coloniality comes to be a rejection of any possibility of internal critique, even as this problematizes Mignolo's own stance: the performative contradiction of writing his critique in English or Spanish within a conceptual framework embedded in a Western subjectivity. But this disavowal of self-implication in the parameters of Western thought is accompanied by a disavowal of the desire at work in the positing of the redemptive indigenous subject, which entails an apocalyptic misreading of non-Western thought. Redemption is only possible through the thought of the other. But this places a particular demand on the indigenous subject to be the subject of salvation, a form of neocolonialism all too common in Latin American (and other) thinking about the 'indigenous'.

Mignolo might retort that his 'border thinking' is not a search for a pure outside, but rather a demand for a thinking that begins with the experience and history of other subjects. His political theodicy implies that the suppression of that possible site of enunciation is a function of Western power/knowledge but articulates that suppression primarily as conceptual. Yet he is at pains to criticize Kusch for his treatment of women on grounds that owe much to 'Western' extensions of notions of democracy but might find difficulties in the 'traditional' apportionment of gender roles in some documents of the Bolivian Movimiento al Socialismo.¹² What grounds this critique of complementarity other than a conceptual and practical politics derived from Western feminism? And if this is the case, then the legacy of the West is not wholly negative.

The problem here is one that constantly emerges from the critical challenge of post-colonialism. If the self-image of the homogenous Western subject as uniquely charged with truth and the future is overthrown, how do we assess those knowledges subalternized in its ascent? And how do we assess the particular truth claims (and indeed notions of truth more generally)

articulated by the ascendant West? These debates parallel debates within the philosophy of science after the challenges of historicism (Kuhn), methodological scepticism (Feyerabend), sociologism (Bloor) and feminism (Harding). The intimations of answers in these cases lie in weaker, more flexible and dialogic notions of truth and knowledge. Similarly, answers to the former problems seem to lie in the opening up of the space of reflection to the numerous traditions of thinking that pre-date and parallel the rise of modern Europe. But such an inclusivity cannot ignore the contributions of Western sciences and philosophy, nor the ways in which they produce the possibility of their self-critique. The encounter can only be a consideration and critique of multiple sources of thinking, all examined under the sign of self-reflective argument. In Kusch, as in Guaman Poma, dialogue means argument, the deployment of forms of rationality (each expanding what might be included under such a heading): the making coeval of 'notions' from different traditions of thinking precisely requires articulation as the form of production of truth. The critical requirement for reading Kusch is recognition that his own dialogic work is done on 'indigenous' thought productions that were already dialogically engaged with Christianity (and Augustinian Tridentine Catholicism at that), as well as on contemporary folk beliefs that are posited as 'timeless' but that may betray traces of multi-sourced construction. His work is to engage in the production of systematicity and totalization, enacting what is surely the primordial desire of philosophy. But, *pace* Mignolo et al., Kusch's work is only suggestive of how the task of critical dialogue might be pursued.

Some of the most interesting models of such a dialogue are taking place now in Bolivia, where *pachakuti*, revolution, has brought new subjects to political power. There, the state is attempting a project of industrialization, especially around mineral extraction, whilst seeking to embed notions of communality and nature derived from traditional social forms within the constitution and quotidian political practice. The results are often messy and contradictory, even risible as in the recent celebration of Inti

Raymi as 'year 5574' of the Aymara calendar, which cut against anthropological disciplinary knowledge: the Aymara did not have such a calendar and the notional date is imaginary. Yet such inventions of tradition are part and parcel of the West's own imaginaries, and risible results can equally well flow from *bien pensant* attempts to see these subjects as 'multitude', ignoring the complex cultural forms that constitute them.

Mignolo places Kusch side by side with Ernesto Laclau, as articulating different approaches to the 'popular', but one might equally well look at how Laclau's model of discursive surface could provide a way to read Kusch, as an example of the messy process of rearticulation.

Notes

1. Here the work of Denise Arnold and Juan de Dios Yapita is exemplary, for instance their *The Metamorphosis of Heads: Textual Struggles, Education and Land in the Andes*, Pittsburgh University Press, Pittsburgh PA, 2006.
2. See Philip Derbyshire, 'Who was Oscar Masotta? Psychoanalysis in Argentina', *Radical Philosophy* 158, November/December 2009, pp. 11–23.
3. Though the Argentine national anthem does refer to Argentines as 'sons' of the Inca, a legacy of the legitimization crisis of Independence and its search for forms of creole authority. See Rebecca Earle, *The Return of the Native*, Duke University Press, Durham NC, 2007, p. 3.
4. Enrique Dussel, *América latina: dependencia y liberación*, F. García Cambeiro, Buenos Aires, 1973; a recent restatement of his position is in 'Europe, Modernity, Eurocentrism', *Nepantla*, vol. 20, no. 3, 2000.
5. This is a Latin American genre whose examples include the Mexicans Samuel Ramos and Octavio Paz – especially the latter's *Labyrinth of Solitude* (1951) – and the Argentine Ezequiel Martínez Estrada, with his *X-Ray of the Pampa* (1933).
6. Wamán Puma (Guaman Poma) was an indigenous writer of seventeenth-century Peru, whose *New Chronicle and Good Government*, a compendium of information and reflection on Inca history and contemporaneous political and social problems, was addressed to Philip III of Spain, although it was lost until its fortuitous rediscovery in Copenhagen in 1906. Juan Santa Cruz Pachakuti Yamqui was writing in Peru at the same time, and his *Account of the Antiquities of this Realm of Piru* (c.1600) is the focus of Kusch's commentary in *América profunda*.
7. For an English discussion, see Sheila Arup, 'Symbolic Connections in Pachakuti Yamqui's Cosmological Diagram', in *Arte, historia e identidad en América: Visiones comparativas*, Instituto de investigaciones estéticas 37, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico, 1994.
8. See Antonio Cornejo Polar, *Escribir en el aire: Ensayo sobre la heterogeneidad socio-cultural en las literaturas andinas*, Editorial Horizonte, Lima, 1994.
9. Martin Heidegger, 'Memorial Address', in *Discourse on Thinking*, trans. John M. Anderson and Hans E. Freund, Harper & Row, New York, 1966, p. 57.
10. See Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence*, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 2000.
11. Walter Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges and Border Thinking*, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 2000.
12. See, for example, 'Socialism comunitario', in *Nueva Crónica y Buen Gobierno*, 24 November 2009.



OUT OF PLACE



15 **Framing and freeing: Utopias of the female body**

LYNDA NEAD

The standard definition of utopia is in two parts: it is at once ‘no place’ and also the imagined location of the good society. Utopian fiction and non-fiction frequently tell the story of the traveller who moves from the flawed world of the present to a different region, geographically separate and remote, where the problems and struggles of our everyday lives are resolved.¹ It is in this sense of the mapping of utopia in terms of space and place that one can begin to speak of utopias of the female body. In particular, I want to propose a connection between the vision of utopia as a sealed and separate place with an idealization of the female body which has been pervasive within Western art and aesthetics.

The best place to begin this exploration of utopias and the female body is with the geography of Thomas More’s *Utopia* (FIG. 1). More begins his account of the society and laws of Utopia with a description of the land itself. Utopia is an island (not surprisingly, it is approximately the size of England). It is crescent-shaped, like a new moon, and between the two horns of the crescent, which are some miles apart, the sea enters and spreads into a broad bay. In the bay itself, the water is calm, smooth and sheltered and the whole inner coast is one great harbour. This contrasts with the outer coast of the island, which is ‘rugged by nature, and so well fortified that a few defenders could beat off the attack of a strong force’.² The entrance into the bay of Utopia is very dangerous, for the waters are littered with natural and man-made obstacles. There are submerged rocks which make

the waters treacherous to navigate, and in the middle of the channel a fortified tower stands on the one rock that rises above the surface of the water. The geography of Utopia seems to have been designed by nature and by artifice to keep out intruders; equally, it fulfils the function of keeping in the Utopians. This dual function of exclusion and containment is focused on the mouth of the bay, which is the only point where entrance or exit is possible, and then only at great risk. The fortified boundaries of Utopia recall the flawed condition of the commonwealth itself – attractive in some respects, but highly unattractive in others, with elaborate constraints imposed on its citizens and with clear restrictions on personal freedom.

There is one more point about the geography of Utopia which is relevant here. The land, it seems, was not always an island. Utopus, who conquered the country and gave it his name and who ‘brought its rude, uncouth inhabitants to such a high level of culture and humanity that they now excel in that regard almost every other people’,³ also changed its geography. After conquering the natives, Utopus promptly dug a channel where the land joined the continent and thus caused the sea to flow around the country. To civilize the land, to create Utopia, the king had first to separate the land from the continent and to render it complete, entire and bounded.

So, Utopia is an island with a rough, impenetrable outer coastline and with one crucial point of access and outlet, which is the treacherous entrance to the bay and its smooth, calm waters within.

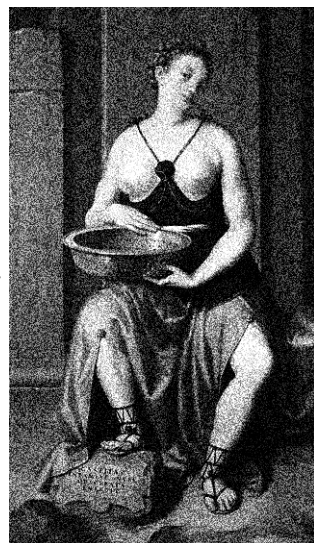
There is a striking analogy between the island of Utopia and a particular utopian representation of the female body. Although the association of a country or state with a woman’s body is a common enough trope within Western political and cultural discourses, the analogy goes beyond that allegorical one. The Western tradition of the female nude is traditionally articulated in terms of the transformation from the actual (the individual body with its inevitable imperfections) to the ideal (the nude). It is the move from a perception of unformed, corporeal matter to the assertion of unity and control. It is this process of transfiguration which renders the nude the perfect subject for the work of art. As Kenneth Clark states in his book *The Nude*, ‘the nude

remains the most complete example of the transmutation of matter into form.⁴ But the resolution of matter and form cannot easily be accomplished in the representation of the *female* body. Woman is both *mater* (mother) and *materia* (matter), biologically determined and potentially wayward. Now, if art is defined as the conversion of matter into form, then imagine how much greater the triumph for art if it is the female body that is thus transformed. Pure nature, transmuted, through the forms of art, into pure culture. The female nude, then, is not simply one subject among others, one form among many; it is *the* subject, *the* form.

The question of containment and boundaries is thus a critical one in representations of the female body. The integrity of the female figure is guaranteed by the impenetrability of its framing contours; the boundaries of the female form have to seem inviolate for the image to offer the possibility of an undisturbing aesthetic experience. The artist who paints or sculpts a female nude performs a similar act of transformation to that of King Utopus. Both take uncivilized matter (the natives/the female body) which is subdued and regulated by enforcing the coastline/outline. Utopia is created, but don't forget the entrance to the bay and its treacherous point of transition between inside and outside.

This relationship between boundaries and the female body is continually reformulated within the Western high-art tradition. Take this allegorical painting of the virtue *Chastity* by the sixteenth-century Italian painter Giovanni Battista Moroni (FIG. 2). The allegorical figure holds a sieve on her lap, which is the symbol of her purity and inviolability. The sieve is filled with water and yet no liquid runs out, for Chastity is watertight; it is impenetrable and allows no leakage. The miraculous water-filled sieve is a metaphor for the ideal, hermetically sealed female body. The boundary has been made absolutely inviolate, a kind of armour between the inside of the body and the outside. Of course, there

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is something worrying and incomplete about the sieve as a figure for the virtuous woman. Sieves may hold on to purity and dispel the impure; or they may retain the impure and relinquish the pure substance. In either case, if nothing is allowed in or out, then the female body remains a disturbing container for both the ideal *and* the polluted. There is an ambiguity here which is reminiscent of the entrance to the bay of Utopia. Keeping in or keeping out? The dual function recalls the original uncivilized condition of the inhabitants of Utopia and of the female sexual body and the necessity to subdue and regulate before the ideal can be achieved.

Woman is able to stand as an allegory of Chastity by displacing the worrying connotations of yielding and porous skin, or oozing gaps and orifices onto the clear outline and metallic surface of the sieve. But there are other ways in which this Utopian desire for clear boundaries and definitions can be satisfied. The female body can be re-formed, its surfaces reinforced and hardened by bodybuilding. Lisa Lyon won the first World Women's Bodybuilding Championship in 1979. About a year later she met the photographer Robert Mapplethorpe and posed for a series of pictures, which were published in a book titled *Lady: Lisa Lyon* in 1983 (FIG. 3). Now bodybuilding is a mixed blessing for feminism. On the one hand, it seems to offer a certain kind of liberation, a way for women to develop their muscularity and physical strength. But, on the other hand, this revised femininity seems simply to exchange one repressive Utopia for another; one body beautiful for another, possibly racier, image of woman which can easily be absorbed within a patriarchal repertoire of feminine stereotypes. What is interesting in the present context, however, is the way in which both Lyon's bodybuilding and Mapplethorpe's photographic techniques are discussed in terms of bringing the female body under control. Both Lyon and Mapplethorpe are referred to in the book as classical sculptors, in their search for a physical and aesthetic ideal: 'his eye

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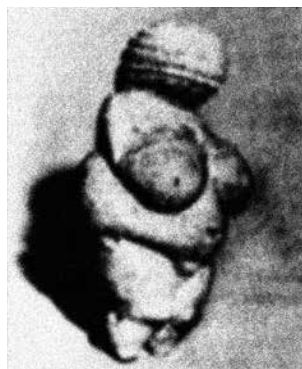


for a body [is] that of a classical sculptor' and she is 'a sculptor whose raw material was her own body'.⁵ The sculptor metaphor is one which emphasizes the projection of surfaces, the building and moulding of form. Together, Lyon and Mapplethorpe turn the raw material of the female body into art.

Now, in talking about these images of the female body in relation to Utopias, I am not referring to the projection of models of Utopian societies but more to the presentation of a Utopian sensibility. Art, in this case, offers the image of something better, a means of escape from the inadequacies of society. Through the visualization of the female body in terms of order, symmetry, harmony and contemplation, art constructs its own sealed world, cut off from the continent of the female sexual body and female desire.

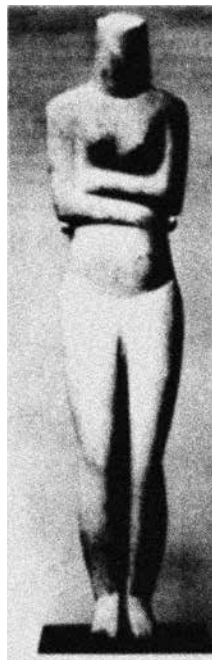
Nowhere is this Utopian drive better demonstrated than in Kenneth Clark's *The Nude*, which was first published in 1956 and is currently sold in the eighth edition of a Penguin paperback. The book is subtitled 'A Study of Ideal Art' and the nature of this ideal is neatly contained in the following example from the book. Clark compares two early representations of the female nude: a prehistoric figure of a woman (FIG. 4) and a later Cycladic doll (FIG. 5). These he respectively designates Vegetable and Crystalline Venus. In the first example the body is described as lumpy and protruding, but in the second image 'the unruly human body has undergone a geometrical discipline'.⁶ This is the important point; the female body has undergone a process of containment: of holding in and keeping out. In the Cycladic figure the contour, the frame of the body, has been sharpened, thus hardening the distinction between inside and outside, between figure and ground, between the subject and the space it is not.

One of the key features of a Utopia is the desire for something which our day-to-day lives don't provide, and



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the awareness of this inadequacy has to be present for the escape to be effective. Thomas More's 'rude and uncouth' natives haunt the civilized society of his utopia; similarly, the lumpy, wayward female body is only ever momentarily controlled by the disciplines of art – its image is never entirely absent. In looking at Kenneth Clark's idealizing project, it is possible to be more historically specific about the undesirable state from which the connoisseur is seeking to escape. In an essay on the Hollywood musical, titled 'Entertainment and Utopia', Richard Dyer discusses the relationship between narrative sequences and musical numbers in establishing the utopian relationship of social inadequacy and escape. He states:

To be effective, the utopian sensibility has to take off from the real experiences of the audience. Yet to do this, to draw attention to the gap between what is and what could be, is, ideologically speaking, playing with fire. What musicals have to do, then ... is to work through these contradictions at all levels, in such a way as to 'manage' them, to make them seem to disappear. They don't always succeed.⁷

Amongst the examples Dyer discusses is *The Gold Diggers of 1933*, in which the specific social problems of scarcity, depression, and so on, are momentarily resolved in the abundance and extravagance of the musical numbers. I refer to this work because I think that it offers an interesting model for understanding the nature of Clark's utopian vision. In her aptly named study of women in post-war Britain, *Only Halfway to Paradise* (1980), Elizabeth Wilson discusses the changing boundaries of sexuality between 1945 and 1968. She summarizes the general tendency of the period as one of 'sexual enlightenment'.⁸ The reports published by investigators such as Kinsey (1948 and 1953) and Masters and Johnson (1966) emphasized woman's right to sexual satisfaction and, whilst this pleasure was still firmly located within the marital relationship, an image of active, desiring and responsible female sexuality was nevertheless put in place. At the risk of being a little reductive about this, it does seem reasonable to suggest that one of the social inadequacies from which Clark may have been wishing to escape into his Utopia of regulated female bodies was precisely the new, post-war definition of female sexuality. And, of course, the fantasy isn't simply Lord Clark's, but that

of a particular section of society which constitutes the audience for high culture and the readership of his book.

But, as Dyer points out, Utopias play with fire, and for Clark there is the constant danger of the female nude returning to its former, pre-utopian state. Considering Georges Rouault's series of drawings of prostitutes (FIG. 6), he states:

All those delicate feelings which flow together in our joy at the sight of an idealised human body ... are shattered and profaned ... from the point of view of form, all that was realised in the nude in its first creation, the sense of healthy structure, the clear geometric shapes and their harmonious disposition has been rejected in favour of lumps of matter, swollen and inert.⁹

What exactly has happened here? The ideals of the nude – structure, geometry, harmony – have given way to unhealthy, unformed lumps of matter. The female nude is meant to transcend the marks of individualized corporeality in a unified formal language; when this fails, both the image of the body and the feelings of the viewer are profaned, or violated.

And yet it is precisely this notion of the unbounded and fluid female body that has also been offered as an alternative Utopia – one in which, to use More's imagery, the civilized Utopians regain their former, uncouth state and in which the island is no longer separated and cut off from the continent. In this alternative Utopia 6 the boundaries between inside and outside are dissolved. In this case it is the social inadequacies of containment and regulation which are displaced by an aesthetic of liberation and freedom from constraint. The opposition is clearly exhibited in Bakhtin's frequently quoted evocation of the carnival in *Rabelais and His World*, in which he contrasts the classical canons of Renaissance aesthetics and the grotesque realism of the Middle Ages:



Contrary to modern canons, the grotesque body is not separated from the rest of the world. It is not a closed, completed unit; it is unfinished, outgrows itself, transgresses its own limits. The stress is laid on those parts of the body that are open to the outside world, that is, the parts through which the world enters the body or emerges from it, or through which the body itself goes out to meet the world.¹⁰

So, as we suspected all along, it is the anal/vaginal entrance to the bay which is the key to Utopia. Bakhtin's account has more to do with nostalgia than Utopia (although the two categories are clearly interrelated), but it is, nevertheless, almost an exact reversal of Kenneth Clark's value system. Bring back the lumps and protuberances; this is an escape from the smooth contours of the Cycladic doll and a celebration of the fecundity of the Willendorf Venus. For the *female* body is undoubtedly central to Bakhtin's definition of the grotesque body – the body in process, liberated from boundaries and modern aesthetics.

This image of an open, unfinished female body is also celebrated in more recent French feminist writing. In this, frequently utopian writing, emphasis is laid on those substances which transgress the boundaries of the body – the mother's milk, tears, urine, and so on. In *Powers of Horror*, Julia Kristeva defines abjection as that which 'does not respect borders, positions, rules. The inbetween, the ambiguous, the composite'.¹¹ For Kristeva, the abject is on the side of the feminine, and the bodily state which she likens to abjection is pregnancy; for in the condition of parturition the maternal body stands at the borderline of categories and dissolves the socially constructed margins of identity and the distinctions between life and death, self and other.

In starting with the topography of Thomas More's island of Utopia, I have discussed an ideal of the female body which is grounded in the containment and framing of the female sexual body. But, as with all Utopias, this image carries within it the means of its own destruction, for the female body constantly threatens to break free from its boundaries and to go beyond the protocols and contours of art. And it is precisely this image

of a liberated, open and unfinished female body which has been celebrated by some recent feminist writers.

The oppressions of the aesthetics of containment are obvious enough, but it is also unlikely that feminist utopian aesthetics are best suited for exploring and expressing the complexities of sexual differences and identities. Within feminist cultural politics, the balance between critique and speculation has always been a particularly difficult one to define. Critique has been seen to operate at the expense of the positing of new alternatives and speculation has been regarded as an avoidance of the pragmatics of the present.¹² But if feminism is to engage in utopian reflection, then the future which we imagine must be one of change and process rather than a state of final, fixed perfection. Similarly, in transforming attitudes towards, and representations of, the female body, utopia could simply be the state which enables the projection of the female body freed from any kind of aesthetic of perfection, offering instead the representation of difference: of age, race, size, physical ability and health.

Notes

- This article was originally a paper given at a one-day conference on utopian thought, held at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, 20 April 1991.
1. For discussion of this aspect of utopian writing, see Krishnan Kumar, *Utopianism*, Open University Press, Milton Keynes, 1991.
 2. Thomas More, *Utopia* (1516), ed. George M. Logan and Robert M. Adams, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989, p. 43.
 3. Ibid.
 4. Kenneth Clark, *The Nude: A Study of Ideal Art*, John Murray, London, 1956, p. 23.
 5. Bruce Chatwin, 'An Eye and Some Body', in *Lady: Lisa Lyon*, Viking, New York, 1983, pp. 9, 11.
 6. Clark, *The Nude*, p. 64.
 7. Richard Dyer, 'Entertainment and Utopia', in Rick Altman, ed., *Genre: The Musical. A Reader*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1981, p. 185.
 8. Elizabeth Wilson, *Only Halfway to Paradise: Women in Post-war Britain 1945-1968*, Tavistock, London and New York, 1980, p. 86.
 9. Clark, *The Nude*, p. 333.
 10. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky, MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 1968, p. 26.
 11. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez, Columbia University Press, New York, 1982, p. 4.
 12. For a useful summary of debates on feminism and utopia in relation to the work of Luce Irigaray, see Margaret Whitford, *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine*, Routledge, London, 1991, pp. 18-25.

16 **From *Abstraction* to *Wunsch*: The *Vocabulaire Européen des Philosophies***

HOWARD CAYGILL

DICTIONARY Say of it: 'It's only for ignoramuses!' ... 'I'd rather die than use one!'

Gustave Flaubert, *Dictionary of Received Ideas*

The *Vocabulaire Européen des Philosophies*¹ deserves a warm welcome from everyone interested in philosophy and its history. While connoisseurs of philosophical lexicography will take particular delight in many of the work's artful technical features and its often audacious solutions to some of the fundamental problems of the genre of philosophical dictionary, the significance of the *Vocabulaire* far exceeds such considerations. The work in many respects redefines the genre of the philosophical dictionary, reviving the cultural ambitions of both the medieval summa and such Enlightenment dictionaries as Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1702). It defines philosophy's past and its future prospects, as well as opening up new areas of research by suggesting unexpected links between existing problems and traditions of philosophy and between philosophy and its 'non-philosophical' others. Its cultural ambition ensures that it remains critical, never lapsing into the extremes of the uselessly monumental or antiquarian, respecting Bataille's definition of the modern dictionary as beginning not with the meaning of words but with their tasks.

Such a text – over fifteen hundred pages largely set in double columns scrupulously and programmatically respecting the idioms of the major European philosophical languages – is less

to be read than to be lived and worked with. It provides a vast number of entries organized (and typographically distinguished) in terms of ‘untranslatable’ terms and their equivalents in the vernacular languages, meta-entries on languages and themes, and introductory short entries. The entries are historically rich, punctuated with shaded insertions of short essays on related themes, concluding with generous and useful bibliographies. With a work of such scale and ambition what follows can only be a provisional report on a few months of cohabitation, premised upon admiration for the *Vocabulaire*’s achievement tempered by a certain curiosity concerning some of its limits and eccentricities. These may be functions of a necessarily partial reading – who could claim or want to claim to have read a whole dictionary? – but some of the omissions and oversights are striking, and, given the overall ambition of the work, worthy of reflection.

One example of such a limit is the absence of an entry on the philosophical dictionary itself, crucial not only as a site for the debate and codification of philosophical idioms but also as a vector for the teaching and dissemination of philosophy. Book V of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* is the earliest surviving example of the philosophical dictionary, organized in terms of concepts, although the genre as we know it is largely a product of the Enlightenment. In his study of the dissemination of Spinozist ideas – *Radical Enlightenment* – Jonathan Israel described the early Enlightenment dictionary as a vector for radical philosophy, ‘a philosophical engine of war which massively invaded the libraries, public and private, of the whole continent’. The subentry on lexicography in the entry on ‘Logos’ is too general to help, unless of course the entire *Vocabulaire* be considered as a vast entry on this very question.

Before pursuing further the dominant and inevitable trope of a dictionary review – repining over what is absent or excluded in its pages – it is necessary to pay unequivocal tribute to the extraordinary achievements of the *Vocabulaire*. Habitual readers or users of philosophical dictionaries will find in the *Vocabulaire*

a summation of the form of the philosophical dictionary, operating at nearly all the levels covered by this genre. At its most basic, the work is designed to satisfy readers in search of a concise, working definition of a concept or problem: each major entry is preceded by a short, historically informed summary of the task or problem posed by the word set in italics. In this respect the work functions well in comparison with my preferred versions of the genre of short-entry philosophical dictionaries: D. Runes's 1962 *Dictionary of Philosophy*, the excellent *Enciclopedia Garzanti di Filosofia* of 1981 and, perhaps surprisingly, I. Frolov's *Dictionary of Philosophy*, first published by Political Literature Publishers (Moscow) in 1980. Each of these gives a short definition of a concept or theme oriented by a particular vision of the relationship between philosophy and non-philosophy. Runes emphasizes the relationship between philosophy, ethics and theology; the Garzanti volume philosophy and culture; Frolov science and political theory. The *Vocabulaire* has its own pre-orientation, to which I'll return below, but it nevertheless functions well within the generic rules of the short-entry dictionary. The entry 'Qualia', for example, is a model of the genre, combining a short, conceptual description with a historical sketch of the dissemination of the term from Latin into the modern languages.

The *Vocabulaire* also makes a powerful contribution to the subgenre of the dictionary of a distinct period of philosophy, especially the inaugural period of Ancient Greek philosophy. In its treatment of Ancient Greek concepts the *Vocabulaire* far exceeds other available working dictionaries in its etymological precision, conceptual rigour and ability to open new perspectives on apparently well-known terms. In comparison *Greek Philosophical Terms: A Historical Lexicon* of 1967 seems garrulous, while J.O. Urmson's *The Greek Philosophical Vocabulary* of 1990 and Ivan Gobry's 1982 *Le vocabulaire grec de la philosophie* are too limited and dry. The *Vocabulaire*'s many excellent entries on Greek philosophical words are in most cases complemented by a review of their subsequent history. As an example, Alliez's entry on 'Aion', with the insert by

Couloubaritsis, while rooted in an account of the Greek experience of the term also provides a fascinating lesson in ancient, medieval and modern understandings of time, with the insert referring to debates in modern Greek philosophy whose importance is neither widely known nor properly appreciated. The magisterial entries on such terms as 'Subject' by Balibar et al. and 'Truth' by Braque et al. are similarly impressive, and deserve to be published in pocket editions to be consulted on trains, in airports and while waiting for buses. In addition to such entries on philosophy's fundamental words of power are the apparently more modest but equally fascinating contributions to discrete concepts such as 'to ti en einai' by Courtine and Rijksbaron. Perhaps most disappointing is the entry on 'Being', where the editors seem to have (understandably) flinched and restricted themselves to a short list of cross-references, directing the reader to 'Esti' for classical and 'Sein' for post-Kantian discussions of the word.

The *Vocabulaire* also functions well as a dictionary for medieval and modern philosophy. Most of the large thematic and conceptual entries include a discussion of the medieval transformation of Greek concepts. Courtine's entry 'Res' is exemplary in this respect, offering a full analysis of the medieval development of the notion of a thing. It is also noteworthy for its inclusion of the Arabic versions of Greek concepts, vitally important for the medieval Latin reception of philosophical concepts. The *Vocabulaire's* recognition of the contribution of Arabic to the development of the language of philosophy is on the whole rather traditional, focusing upon its role as a vector for the Latin reception of Greek concepts and texts. This approach seems the result of a self-imposed editorial restriction, but one which is drawn perhaps too tightly. The contribution of the work of Henri Corbin in bringing Arabic and Persian philosophical texts into French and his post-war achievement in recovering an entire history of Islamic philosophy for European thought remains largely unacknowledged, with Corbin making a sole appearance as a translator of Heidegger. This aspect or restriction

of the *Vocabulaire* will inevitably provoke an intensification of the debate into the relationship between the self-image of philosophy and 'Europe', which can only to be welcomed.

The *Vocabulaire* proves an invaluable source for information and guidance for the field of modern philosophy, although the reader must be prepared to search not only through the body of the dictionary but also through the conceptual network accessed via the indexes. The latter comprise an index of names, principal authors and passages cited, translators and translations, and finally an index of words. Perhaps unique in its respect for the modern dissemination of philosophical concepts throughout the vernacular languages, the entries of the *Vocabulaire* cover most of the modern 'European' languages including Basque, Ukrainian and Finnish and Hungarian – the latter pair contributing specific words for divinity. The coverage of Russian terms is especially impressive, the pursuit of the entries in the index of Russian terms providing a course in Russian-language philosophy. The entries on the philosophical languages are also invaluable, especially those on 'Russian' and 'Greek' by Malamoud/Omelyantchik and Couloubaritsis. The entry on 'English' by Clero and Laugier is the most disappointing, never seriously confronting the significance of the emergence of English as the current philosophical *koine*. In the midst of such linguistic diversity the *Vocabulaire* succeeds in presenting many of the central concepts and arguments of the philosophy of the modern period.

Part of the pleasure of combing the *Vocabulaire*'s indexes consists in being diverted in unexpected directions: I have still not been able to find 'a priori' but the search has led to many, probably more interesting, places. The indexes also permit the *Vocabulaire* to be used as an example of another subgenre of the philosophical dictionary, that of the idiosyncratic individually authored work. Quine's *Quiddities* and Savater's *Dizionario filosofico* establish the limits of this subgenre between the often wicked individualism of the former and the parochial gossip of the latter. In the case of the *Vocabulaire* it is possible, using

the list of contributors provided at the beginning of the work, to follow the entries of a particular author, often adding up to a text in their own right, as is the case with those of Balibar, Courtine and Alain de Libera. The list of contributors also makes it possible to identify large individual contributions by writers such as Alliez on 'Aion', Badiou on 'French', Bodei on 'Italian', Bollack on 'Memory', Dastur on 'Appearance' and Malabou on 'Plasticity'.

A further possibility opened by the indexes is the use of the *Vocabulaire* as a dictionary for the work of individual philosophers. The principal authors index seems designed to serve precisely this purpose although there are differences in the treatment of philosophers, some being considered more principal than others, or, as is noted at the head of the index, being 'treated in a more detailed manner'. The entries on Aristotle, Descartes, Hegel, Heidegger, Husserl, Kant, Plato and Wittgenstein are accordingly distinct from the others in the type and extent of their coverage. This is an indication of the virtual canon that structures the *Vocabulaire's* vision of philosophy and its history.

There are two subgenres of the philosophical dictionary to which the *Vocabulaire* does not pretend to make any contribution. These are the dictionaries that focus on philosophers and on philosophical texts. There is very little biographical information or attempt to reconstruct and present an individual philosophical itinerary, as is the premiss of Lange and Alexander's *Philosophen-Lexicon*. The same holds for the treatment of philosophical works as a basic unit of meaning – there is no systematic treatment of the philosophical text as a whole such as that proposed in Franco Volpi's *Dizionario delle opere filosofiche*. Instead the *Vocabulaire* samples and reassembles fragments of text into a consecutive historical argument, separating concepts from their setting within texts and detaching texts from their broader cultural and political situations. The systematic relegation of the integrity of the philosophical text as a site for

philosophizing is evident even in attempts to recuperate the notion of the integral work in the index of principal authors. The entry on the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781/1787) gives a list of topics in order of appearance in the *Critique* but it would be impossible to gain any sense of the consistency of that text from this presentation.

The *Vocabulaire* eschews any systematic reference to dates and places of philosophers' lives and the publication of their works, strangely distancing itself from the geo-philosophy to which its attention to linguistic difference would seem to incline it. While the individual articles possess detailed and valuable bibliographies, with much of the necessary bibliographic information nested within them, this is not assembled in the indexes nor systematically respected in the texts of the articles themselves. The effect of this perhaps necessary avoidance of repetition of dates and places is to blur the historical specificity of emergence and development of philosophical concepts. While such biographical and bibliographic information is readily available elsewhere, it would have been very simple to add it to the indexes and make the coverage of the *Vocabulaire* more complete.

In spite of such caveats regarding biography and bibliography, the historical range of the *Vocabulaire* remains one of its most impressive features, providing a comprehensive account of the history of the European philosophical language. Rivalling Joachim Ritter's monumental and still incomplete *Historisches Wortebuch der Philosophie*, the *Vocabulaire's* sense of engagement and argument with the history of philosophy contrasts favourably with the often indiscriminate citation that characterizes the German work. Yet the inevitable choices taken in each article regarding inclusion and approach are guided not only by an implied canon but also by a vision of philosophy defined by what it regards as its friendly neighbours and what it silently excludes.

To a large degree the *Vocabulaire* is informed by a vision of philosophy as standing in close proximity to art and aesthetics and to a marked but lesser degree to psychoanalysis. One of the

most wonderful features of the work is its systematic descriptions of the relationships between philosophical and aesthetic concepts. This is evident not only where it might be expected, in the entries on 'Aesthetics', 'Art' and 'Beauty', but also in entries not usually anticipated in philosophical dictionaries such as 'Baroque' and 'Work in Progress' as well as in crossovers between philosophical and aesthetic concepts such as '*Stimmung*' and 'Form'. 'Baroque' and 'Work in Progress' are extremely suggestive: the former proposing a review of the debate around the nature of the stylistic concept, the latter an eccentric but engaging attempt to situate Schwitters's *Merzbau* in terms of the concept of *energeia*. The impressive entry on '*Stimmung*' (attunement) aligns musical and philosophical senses of the term with two facing essays on Heidegger's and Stockhausen's uses of the concept.

Energeia is one of the key organizing concepts of the *Vocabulaire* cited by the editor Barbara Cassin in her introduction as part of a distinction between language as an inventive action and as a thing or completed work (*ergon*). Although the word does not have its own entry, the index of Greek words functioned perfectly to direct this reader to the appropriate entries and the short essay by Cassin nested within the entry 'Force'. The fascinating opening paragraphs of this entry by Balibar on the relationship between the concepts of force and energy create a desire in the reader to find out more about this and other episodes in the relationship between philosophy and natural science, but unfortunately this is left unsatisfied by the *Vocabulaire*. The absence of comprehensive coverage of the concepts of natural philosophy is perhaps the most questionable aspect of the entire work.

If nested within the *Vocabulaire* is an implied dictionary of philosophical aesthetics, traceable through the cross-references at the head of each related entry, what is definitely – stunningly – absent is a dictionary of philosophy and science. The *Vocabulaire* offers a history of philosophy that rigorously respects and enforces the divergence between philosophy and science in the modern period, a divergence repeatedly called into

question, especially in recent French philosophy and history of science. The most obvious and superficial symptom of this exclusion appears in the indexes of words. There is no entry on *Wissenschaft* and the index refers to Art, Nature, Literature, *Geisteswissenschaften*. The entry on nature, surprisingly short, moves from Aristotle's dictionary definition of *physis* (Metaphysics V) to Heidegger's reading of *physis*: it is accompanied by supplementary arguments on 'Homer, *Physis* and *Pharmakon*' and the 'Surnatural'. There is no 'Science' and the reference in the French index has in parenthesis 'human, moral, new, political, social, *de l'esprit*, of man, of language etc.', with cross-references to 'Human Sciences', 'Writing', 'Epistemology', '*Geisteswissenschaften*' and 'Politics'. The absence of an entry on science is not covered by the small entries on 'Epistemology' and 'Human Sciences', nor on the discrete sciences such as astronomy, biology, chemistry and physics.

The systematic absence of natural philosophy and philosophical cosmology is confirmed by the relegation of Newton from a 'principal author' to a 'proper name', a fate not shared by Cardinal John Henry Newman. The Bergson preferred by the *Vocabulaire* is the early model of the 1890s, not the author of *Creative Evolution* or *Duration and Simultaneity*, and the only reference to Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature* is to be found, tangentially, under the entry discussing the Russian term *Samost*. The superficial absence of direct reference to natural philosophy extends into the articles themselves, which seem uniformly to respect the modern separation between philosophy and science. A striking exception already mentioned is Balibar's entry 'Force', which, with its clear distinction of force and energy and its philosophical history of the former, will have to satisfy those coming to the *Vocabulaire* from their readings of Bergson, Whitehead, Deleuze, Prigogine and Stengers in search of help in understanding the philosophy of nature. More typical is the entry '*Mutazione*' (Mutation), which focuses on Machiavelli's account of political mutation with no reference to the mutations

of the concept itself in evolutionary biology and genetics. Creationists, incidentally, will be cheered by the complete absence of Darwin and his natural philosophy from the *Vocabulaire*, to say nothing of the concept of evolution.

Nevertheless, the *Vocabulaire* is an immense achievement. It demands time to live with it and to learn how to use it. It may be that many of the shortcomings and parochial habits that I have sensed are less a function of the work than of insufficiently developed skills in using it. As a philosophical dictionary, it is perhaps *sui generis* and any attempt to judge it according to existing generic rules is fundamentally misplaced and inappropriate. The work certainly succeeds in its ambition to map differences within the linguistic histories of philosophy and it opens new agendas for – as well as setting new standards of – debate. It makes an important contribution not only as a work of reference, but, more significantly, as a report on the place of philosophy in European culture and its prospects, as it is called to leave the confines of the peninsula and its languages.

Notes

1. Barbara Cassin, ed., *Vocabulaire Européen des Philosophies: Dictionnaire des Intraduisibles*, Éditions du Seuil/Dictionnaires Le Robert, 2004. xxiv + 1531 pp., €95.00, 2 85 036 580 7 (Le Robert), 2 02 030730 8 (Seuil).

English translations of 'Subject', 'Gegenstand/Objekt', 'Object' and 'Res' appeared in *Radical Philosophy* 138 & 139, July/August and September/October 2006.

17 Deleuze's Stoic cosmopolitanism

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The status of the political within the work of Gilles Deleuze has recently become a topic of contention.¹ Two recent books argue the case for two extremes among a range of possible interpretations. At one end of the spectrum, Peter Hallward has argued that Deleuze's personal ethic of deterritorialization and self-destruction is so disengaged with the actuality of social relations that it is unable to offer any serious political philosophy.² At the other end of the spectrum, Manuel De Landa outlines in his most recent book an entire social and political theory modelled upon Deleuze and Guattari's ontology of machinic assemblages.³ In what follows I offer a contribution to this literature on Deleuze's political philosophy.⁴ To be more precise I should say Deleuze and Guattari's political philosophy, for Deleuze's most explicit comments on politics appear in the co-authored *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*. If *Anti-Oedipus* is the critical and destructive polemic, then *A Thousand Plateaus* is the creative and constructive manifesto, and so my focus shall be on the latter. In particular I shall focus upon the 'plateau' entitled '1227: Treatise on Nomadology – The War Machine', but I shall also draw upon material from Deleuze's solo work *Difference and Repetition* that prefigures the central theme of that section. I shall argue that the political philosophy developed by Deleuze and Guattari shares much in common with, and should be seen as part of, the cosmopolitan tradition within political thinking. This broad tradition holds that all human beings belong to a

single global community and that this universal community is more fundamental than the local political states into which individuals are born. As we shall see, this tradition has its origins with the ancient Cynics and Stoics.

The claim that Deleuze stands within a cosmopolitan tradition stretching back to the Stoics is a striking one, especially when one bears in mind Deleuze's explicit interest in Stoicism in *The Logic of Sense*, where he engages with it on a number of fronts. Drawing upon the Stoic theory of incorporeals, Deleuze outlines an ontological surface populated by bodies on one side and incorporeal effects or events on the other. He also draws upon what he calls the Stoic theory of *aiôn* and *chronos*, a dual reading of time each part of which corresponds to one of the two sides of his ontological surface (the extended present of *chronos* is the time of bodies, while the durationless limit of *aiôn* separating past and future is the time of the incorporeal transformation or event). As it happens, none of this bears much relation to what we know about the ancient Stoics' ontology and theory of time, and in the latter case Deleuze's confusion reflects that of his source.⁵ His briefer remarks about Stoic ethics come closer to what we find in ancient Stoicism – especially the later Stoics – and the very positive tone suggests that he felt a real affinity with the ancient Stoa.⁶ It is in the light of his claim that Stoic ethics offers us the only meaningful form of ethics left, namely 'not to be unworthy of what happens to us',⁷ that I argue here that Deleuze also proposes a Stoic politics, even if he never explicitly conceived it as such.

Before turning to Deleuze and Guattari directly, I shall begin by introducing ancient cosmopolitanism. I shall then focus in on one particularly important ancient text relating to the *Republic* of Zeno of Citium, the founder of Stoicism, analysing it alongside an equally important passage from *Difference and Repetition*. Then I shall turn to *A Thousand Plateaus*, and suggest the ways in which Deleuze and Guattari's political philosophy may be read as a contemporary version of ancient Stoic cosmopolitanism.

Ancient cosmopolitanism

The origins of ancient cosmopolitanism are traditionally attributed to Diogenes the Cynic. Asked where he came from, Diogenes is reported to have replied 'I am a citizen of the cosmos.'⁸ This is the earliest attributed use of the word *cosmopolitês*, 'citizen of the cosmos', although it is interesting to note that a number of other Socratic philosophers roughly contemporary with Diogenes are recorded as having expressed a similar thought, and that this thought is also attributed to Socrates himself.⁹

What did Diogenes mean by this claim? His Cynicism has often been presented as a primarily nihilistic philosophy, and so one might assume that he simply meant to reject any tie to a traditional state and to reject the responsibilities of being a citizen. Yet elsewhere Diogenes is reported to have used the word *apolis* when wanting to assert that he was without a city in the conventional sense.¹⁰ So Diogenes' use of *cosmopolitês* suggests something more than mere indifference to existing political institutions, namely a positive allegiance to the cosmos.¹¹ Unfortunately the evidence for Diogenes is thin and his *Republic*, which presumably outlined his political thoughts, is lost.¹² Nevertheless, his modest contribution would bear significant fruit.

Cynicism continued after the death of Diogenes under the stewardship of his pupil Crates, accompanied by his Cynic wife Hipparchia. According to tradition, when Zeno of Citium first arrived in Athens he became a student of Crates, and so it is reasonable to assume that Zeno was familiar with the Cynic idea of being a citizen of the cosmos. Zeno too wrote a *Republic* and it is reported that it was written when he was still a pupil of Crates.¹³ Thus ancient sources joke that it was written 'on the tail of the dog'.¹⁴ The surviving evidence for Zeno's *Republic* is greater than that for Diogenes' *Republic*, but it is still thin enough to make reconstruction of its doctrines difficult. Among the many attempts at reconstruction, two broad approaches stand out; I shall call these the 'Platonic' and the 'Cynic' interpretations.

The Platonic interpretation of Zeno's *Republic* places particular weight on the claim that it was written as a response to Plato's *Republic*, and takes Zeno's choice of title as a deliberate reference to Plato's work of the same name.¹⁵ It also notes a number of fragments of Zeno's *Republic* that appear to echo material in Plato's *Republic*, such as the rejection of traditional education. It also draws attention to an extended fragment in which Zeno is mentioned alongside Plato as fellow admirers of the Spartan king Lycurgus.¹⁶ Thus the Platonic interpretation suggests that in his *Republic* Zeno outlined an ideal state – an isolated political community modelled on Sparta – which differed from Plato's ideal state by only admitting the wise as citizens,¹⁷ thereby avoiding the problem of how to ensure harmony between the social classes. Zeno's ideal state, this interpretation suggests, is an egalitarian community of sages, uninterested in the outside world.¹⁸

The Cynic interpretation offers a quite different reconstruction. It notes that Zeno is reported to have written his *Republic* under the influence of Crates and so it suggests that Crates' influence would have left its mark. It argues – contra the Platonic interpretation – that the choice of title might just as well refer to Diogenes' *Republic* as it might to Plato's, and so the title alone is not enough to warrant the claim of a Platonic influence. It also argues that the fragment connecting Zeno, Plato and Lycurgus does not say what the Platonic interpretation supposes. It notes that many of the other fragments report ideas that might just as well suggest a Cynic ancestry as they might an echo of Plato's utopia, such as the rejection of traditional education, temples, law courts and currency, and the advocacy of open sexual relationships.¹⁹ More importantly, the Cynic interpretation draws attention to an extended fragment that appears to call into question the claim that Zeno proposed an isolated community limited to just the wise:

The much admired *Republic* of Zeno, the founder of the Stoic sect, is aimed at this one main point, that our household arrangements should not be based on cities or parishes, each one marked out by

its own legal system, but we should regard all human beings as our fellow citizens and local residents, and there should be one way of life and order, like that of a herd grazing together and nurtured by a common *nomos*. Zeno wrote this, picturing as it were a dream or image of a philosopher's well-regulated society.²⁰

The word *nomos* has been left untranslated and we shall return to this in the next section. In the meantime we can note that this passage implies that *all* human beings (*pantas anthrôpous*) will be citizens in Zeno's ideal community, not just the wise. In the light of the claim that Zeno wrote his *Republic* under the influence of Crates, the Cynic interpretation suggests that this image of all humankind sharing one way of life is an expression of the cosmopolitanism first articulated by Diogenes. Zeno's ideal, this interpretation argues, is one in which all human beings are citizens of the cosmos, sharing a common way of life, indifferent to the geographical divisions embodied by traditional states. This may be reconciled with the claim that only the wise will be citizens by placing this universal community in a utopian future in which everyone has become a sage, and it is reported that the Stoic sage will follow the Cynic (and thus cosmopolitan) way of life.²¹ It is to this interpretation that Kropotkin subscribed when he proclaimed Zeno the finest ancient exponent of anarchism.²²

Although the evidence is thin and both interpretations involve a considerable amount of conjecture, the Cynic interpretation seems the more plausible of the two. It gains further weight when one places Zeno's *Republic* alongside the works of subsequent Stoics, such as the following passage from Seneca:

Let us grasp the idea that there are two commonwealths (*duas res publicas*) – the one, a vast and truly common State (*vere publicam*), embracing gods and men, in which we look neither to this corner nor to that, but measure the boundaries of our citizenship by the path of the sun; the other, the one to which we have been assigned by the accident of birth.²³

Seneca's unbounded common state – measured by the path of the sun – embraces the entire cosmos and is clearly no isolated

community. Like Diogenes and Zeno, his ideal is in contrast to traditional political states. Epictetus takes up the same theme:

What other course remains for men than that which Socrates took when asked to what country he belonged, never saying 'I am an Athenian', or 'I am a Corinthian', but 'I am of the cosmos'? For why do you say that you are an Athenian, instead of mentioning merely that corner into which your paltry body was cast at birth?²⁴

The same thought reappears throughout the *Meditations* of the emperor-turned-philosopher Marcus Aurelius, from which the following is just one example:

The cosmos is as it were a State (*polis*) – for of what other single polity can the whole race of humankind be said to be fellow members?²⁵

This broad Cynic–Stoic tradition of cosmopolitanism is not without its tensions, however. It is one thing for Diogenes to proclaim that he is a citizen of the cosmos; it is quite another for Marcus to declare that the cosmos is a state of which *everyone* is a citizen. What these thoughts do have in common is a rejection of one's membership of the traditional state. Diogenes of Babylon (head of the Stoa in the second century BC) provocatively claimed while on a trip to Rome that, given that a city should be defined as a group of virtuous people living together under a common law, Rome itself was not a true city.²⁶ Only the cosmos – running according to its own immanent cosmic law – should be called a city, for it alone fulfils the requirements of this definition. Moreover, only the wise can claim citizenship of that city, for 'among the foolish (*aphronôn*) there exists no city nor any law'.²⁷ Here we are back to Zeno's claim that only the wise will be citizens in his utopia, suggesting a limited community.

In order to overcome these tensions it may be helpful to think of cosmopolitanism as a political model with three distinct phases.²⁸ The first phase would be the lone individual who claims to be a citizen of the cosmos. This first phase is *in itself* Diogenes' apparent political ideal. However, in a world with more than

one cosmopolitan sage, such individuals would acknowledge one another as equals and fellow-citizens of the cosmos, following a shared way of life. Thus they would constitute a community of sages, regardless of their individual geographical locations. This community of sages – whether dispersed or gathered together in one place – would form a second phase. The third phase would be a hypothetical future in which everyone has attained the wisdom of a sage and thus everyone has become a fellow-citizen of the cosmos. In such an ideal situation all existing traditional states and laws would become irrelevant and there would be what might best be described as an anarchist utopia. In this third phase, all humankind would share one way of life, ‘like that of a herd grazing together and nurtured by a common *nomos*’.

Nomos

Plutarch’s account of Zeno’s *Republic* in *On the Fortune or Virtue of Alexander* is arguably the most important fragment that survives. It is worth citing again in full:

The much admired *Republic* of Zeno, the founder of the Stoic sect, is aimed at this one main point, that our household arrangements should not be based on cities or parishes, each one marked out by its own legal system, but we should regard all human beings as our fellow citizens and local residents, and there should be one way of life and order, like that of a herd grazing together and nurtured by a common *nomos*. Zeno wrote this, picturing as it were a dream or image of a philosopher’s well-regulated society.²⁹

As before, the word *nomos* has been left untranslated. We are perhaps most familiar with the Greek word *nomos* from discussions associated with the political theory of the ancient Sophists. In that context, *nomos* is usually understood to refer to custom or convention, and, later on, law. Thus some readers of Plutarch take Zeno to be saying that all human beings should follow one common law, rather than different legal systems in different states. However, *nomos* has a much wider range of meanings than just custom or law, and altogether a total of thirteen distinct

senses of *nomos* have been isolated.³⁰ Before *nomos* took on the meaning of custom or law it was also used to refer to the pasture, the unregulated space outside the confines of the city-state (*polis*).³¹ Thus other readers of Plutarch take Zeno to be saying that all human beings should live like a herd grazing together on a common pasture, namely an undivided Earth. Greek as it is written today includes a system of accents, and the difference between *nomos* as custom or law on the one hand and *nomos* as pasture on the other is indicated by the presence of an accent on either the first or the second omicron: *nómos* = custom, law; *nomós* = pasture.³² Some textual scholars have disagreed about the location of the accent, but for Zeno, writing before the introduction of accents, the word would have been inherently ambiguous. The general sense of the text as a whole, however, is clear enough: rather than live according to the local customs and conventions of different city-states, people should instead aspire to living according to one common law, like a herd grazing on a common pasture.

The word *nomos* also features in the philosophy of Deleuze. In particular it appears in *Difference and Repetition* during a discussion of Duns Scotus' univocal ontology (see *DR* 53–4/36). Deleuze is concerned with outlining a concept of distribution appropriate to a univocal or immanent conception of being. In order to do so he draws a contrast between two types of distribution: distribution according to *logos* and distribution according to *nomos*. A distribution according to *logos* is a distribution in which that which is distributed is divided up; the distribution of parcels of land to different sedentary farmers, for instance. Such a distribution requires a *logos* in the form of a judgement or a principle; it is a proportional determination. A distribution according to *nomos*, in contrast, is a distribution in which this relationship is reversed. Rather than individuals dividing up a territory and distributing it to themselves, instead individuals distribute themselves across an open and undivided territory; nomadic shepherds scattered across an undivided plain, for instance. This is a distribution according to *nomos*, a nomadic distribution:

We must first of all distinguish a type of distribution which implies a dividing up of that which is distributed. ... A distribution of this type proceeds by fixed and proportional determinations. ... Then there is a completely other distribution which must be called nomadic, a nomad *nomos*, without property, enclosure or measure. Here, there is no longer a division of that which is distributed but rather a division among those who distribute *themselves* in an open space – a space which is unlimited, or at least without precise limits. ... To fill a space, to be distributed within it, is very different from distributing the space. (*DR* 53–4/36)

Drawing upon the work of Emmanuel Laroche,³³ Deleuze uses *nomos* in its earlier sense of pasture and stresses the meaning of its root *nemô*, to distribute.³⁴ A nomadic distribution is one in which, for instance, shepherds distribute themselves and their livestock over an undivided and unregulated territory, namely the pasture (*nomos*) beyond the borders of the city-state (*polis*). For Deleuze a nomad is simply one who operates according to this model of distribution, just as in Greek a nomad (*nomados*) is simply someone who lives on the pasture (*nomos*).³⁵ It is worth stressing that his references to nomads – both here and elsewhere – should not be taken either too literally or as mere metaphors. Deleuze presents us with a functional definition of what it means to be nomadic, namely to relate to a space in a specific way. This functional definition should in theory apply to traditional nomads, such as those who wander the steppe of central Asia, but it is by no means limited to them. Nor is it merely metaphorical, for it contains within it a precise meaning against which particular cases may be assessed.³⁶

Returning to Zeno, let us note two key points in Plutarch's important testimony. The first is the thought that human beings should share 'one way of life and order', following a single common *nomos*, understood as custom or law. The second is that this common way of life should transcend the traditional boundaries that demarcate cities or parishes, like that of 'a herd grazing together and nurtured by a common *nomos*', understood as pasture. Zeno's ideal, according to this testimony at least, is

a way of life in which individuals do not divide up territory into distinct states (distributing the territory to themselves) but rather live together in one undivided territory (distributing themselves across the territory). It is of course impossible to attribute to Zeno a theory of different models of distribution along the lines that Deleuze provides, and there is no evidence to suggest that Deleuze was familiar with this fragment from Zeno's *Republic*,³⁷ but nevertheless the resonance is striking.

Nomadology

Deleuze's concept of a nomadic distribution forms the foundation for what is arguably the nearest thing to a political philosophy within his *œuvre*, namely his analysis with Guattari of the 'state apparatus' and 'nomad war machine' in *A Thousand Plateaus*. In *Difference and Repetition* we have seen that Deleuze draws a distinction between distributions according to *logos* and those according to *nomos*. Yet *nomos* was also presented as that which is beyond the boundaries or control of the *polis* – it is the occupied space without precise limits, the expanse around the town.³⁸ The *polis* is by contrast the place in which everything is ordered according to a *logos*. There is thus a natural shift from a contrast between *logos* and *nomos* (in *DR*) to one between *polis* and *nomos* (in *MP*). Deleuze and Guattari flesh out this abstract distinction between *polis* and *nomos* by casting it as a distinction between the 'state apparatus' and the 'nomad war machine'. These are not merely two alternative modes of political operation; they are diametrically opposed to one another, '*nomos* against *polis*' (*MP* 437/353).

Building upon Deleuze's analysis in *Difference and Repetition*, the state apparatus is a principle of organization that distributes territory to individuals, marking out borders, erecting boundaries and creating spaces of interiority. It is a principle of sovereignty and control. In contrast, the nomad war machine is a principle of movement and becoming, a principle of exteriority indifferent to the boundaries laid down by the state apparatus.

From the perspective of the state, the war machine is violent and destructive, but on its own terms it is simply in a process of continual movement. It is nomadic because its natural habitat is on *nomos*, operating according to a nomadic distribution. The nomads distribute themselves across the open undivided steppe while the state allocates portions of land to individuals.

An important source for Deleuze and Guattari here is the work of Jean-Pierre Vernant, who has dealt with the close relationship between these varying modes of spatial distribution and the rise of the *polis*.³⁹ In his analysis, the reforms of the Athenian Cleisthenes overturned the previous tribal political organization that was qualitative and mobile, replacing it with a homogeneous and geometrical allocation of plots; the social organization of the clan was replaced by one of the soil.⁴⁰ Vernant emphasizes that this was primarily a shift in categories of thinking about space and suggests that Plato, in his use of a similar mode of spatial distribution, can be seen to express this form of allocation raised to the status of an ideal model. For Vernant, Plato is the archetypal theorist of distribution according to *logos*.⁴¹ In contrast to this geometrical allocation of land undertaken by the *polis*, *nomos* refers to the unallocated common land outside the boundaries of the *polis*. A nomad is simply one who traverses this open space without dividing it.

This contrast between *nomos* and *polis* is, however, a formal one. In concrete situations both traits may be found together in varying measures; smooth spaces may be found in the centre of the *polis* while striations can divide the smoothest of spaces (shipping lanes across the open sea, for instance). But rather than conceive these as two antithetical types of *place*, it may be more accurate to present them as two distinct political *modes of operation*, based upon differing models of distribution. Deleuze's nomadic distribution forms the foundation for a nomadic ethic, a certain way of relating to any particular space or situation. What we are offered is a political ethic in which individuals distribute themselves across a territory rather than distribute

territory to themselves. It is, fundamentally, a cosmopolitan ethic, a rejection of political ties to particular locations, and a reorientation of the way in which one relates to social and political space: 'it is possible to live striated on the deserts, steppes, or seas; it is possible to live smooth even in the cities, to be an urban nomad' (*MP* 601/482).

This antithesis between *polis* and *nomos* – state apparatus and nomad war machine – is developed further. The former uses the 'royal' or 'major' science of geometry to distribute territory and demarcate an interiority that forms its zone of control. The latter uses the 'nomad' or 'minor' science of the numbering number, allocating ordinals to individuals, in order to assist their movement across an open space (*MP* 484–5/389). This distinction between major and minor science is presented in terms of Lucretius contra Plato; becoming and heterogeneity opposed to 'the stable, the eternal, the identical, the constant' (*MP* 447/361). Deleuze and Guattari outline four differentiating characteristics – hydraulic versus solid, vortical versus linear, becoming versus eternal, problematic versus theorematic – all of which have ancient origins.⁴² In fact, the distinction itself comes from two ancient sources: Proclus and Plato. Deleuze and Guattari draw upon Proclus' account of the theorematic-problematic argument between Speusippus and Menaechmus.⁴³ Speusippus (Plato's nephew and his successor as the head of the Academy) is reported to have made the clearly Platonic claim that 'there is no coming to be among eternal'.⁴⁴ Consequently nothing needs to be created or solved; instead there is only contemplative understanding of the already perfect Forms and abstract theoretical speculation. Menaechmus (a pupil of the mathematician Eudoxus), on the other hand, begins with the empiricist proposition that 'the discovery of theorems does not occur without recourse to matter'.⁴⁵ For him, science is the art of solving concrete problems that originate in specific situations; it is always a question of engineering and pragmatics. Deleuze and Guattari also cite Plato as a source for this distinction. In

the *Timaeus* Plato proposes becoming as a counter-model that could rival identity, only to reject it as a serious possibility.⁴⁶ Both of these sources make it clear that major science is simply another phrase for Platonism. Consequently minor science refers to everything that escapes from the Platonic model. Platonic major science is, in the words of Michel Serres, 'a science of dead things',⁴⁷ whereas minor science is a science of becoming. For Deleuze and Guattari the difference between these two scientific models also reflects the difference between an ontology of transcendence and an ontology of immanence – in other words, the difference between Platonism and Stoicism.

This distinction between two modes of distribution and two models for science is also reflected in a distinction between two types of space: the smooth and the striated. The undivided *nomos* is a smooth space; the divided and bounded territory of the *polis* is a striated space. The former is two-dimensional vectorial space that can be explored 'only by legwork' (*MP* 460/371). The latter is a three-dimensional metric grid in which locations can be determined in an absolute space. We might characterize these as Leibnizian and Newtonian conceptions of space respectively, the merits of which were famously debated in the correspondence between Leibniz and Clarke, and the challenge to reconcile them was later taken up by Kant. Nomads occupy a smooth vectorial space, following a trajectory without a predetermined end point. They distribute themselves in smooth space and this is more important than physical movement; indeed, nomads need not move at all (*MP* 472/381). Migrants by contrast travel from A to B, from one fixed point to another within a predetermined grid (*MP* 471/380). The latter requires an additional dimension in order to make a representation of the grid as a whole.

Deleuze and Guattari's conceptions of the state apparatus as primarily a principle of order and organization and the nomad war machine as a principle of movement and becoming looks at first glance as if it is simply an expression of the wider ontology

developed in *A Thousand Plateaus, Difference and Repetition* and elsewhere. In Deleuze's process philosophy of Nietzschean forces, movements of becoming or deterritorialization have an ontological priority over moments of stability, sedimentation or reterritorialization. Or, to be more precise, such stability is only ever apparent: in reality everything is in a continual state of flux at various levels of speed and slowness. This might lead us to assume that for Deleuze and Guattari the apparent order and stability of the state apparatus are merely a slowing down of the processes that constitute the nomad war machine, but in fact they insist that in this case there is an irreducible opposition: 'in every respect, the war machine is of another species, another nature, another origin than the state apparatus' (MP 436/352). They are thus not two aspects of their ontology but rather two modes of distribution that imply two quite different modes of existence. The distinction is not a correlate of Deleuze's ontology; it is a part of his ethics.

Deleuze's cosmopolitanism

Deleuze's conception of a nomadic distribution across an undivided *nomos* has much in common with Stoic expressions of cosmopolitanism in which the wise conceive themselves as citizens distributed across an undivided cosmos. The intriguing connection between these two models of spatial distribution is Zeno's utopian image of all humankind living on a common *nomos*. There are some important terminological differences, however, reflecting differences in ontology. For the Stoics, the cosmos is conceived as a *polis*, the only true *polis*, for the cosmos is the only entity governed by a common rational law (*logos*). The Stoics contrast this rationally ordered cosmic *polis* with actual cities that fail to meet their standards of rationality. In Deleuze and Guattari's *nomos-polis* dichotomy, the undivided *nomos* functions as the Stoics' ideal cosmic *polis*, while the striated *polis* fulfils the role of the actual cities criticized by the Stoics. Both the Stoics and Deleuze and Guattari aspire to the undivided

- Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*, Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park PA, 1994; P. Patton, *Deleuze and the Political*, Routledge, London, 2000; N. Thoburn, *Deleuze, Marx, and Politics*, Routledge, London, 2003.
5. The Stoics in fact posit four types of incorporeal, of which linguistic meaning or sense (*lekton*, that which is said, often translated as 'sayable') is just one (the other three are time, place and void). Deleuze's supposedly Stoic 'incorporeal effects' are merely examples of these incorporeal linguistic predicates. There is no Stoic concept of an 'incorporeal event' along the lines that Deleuze suggests. Nor is there any conception of parallel series of bodies-causes and incorporeal-effects inhabiting two sides of a single surface. Deleuze's account of *aiôn* and *chronos* does not correspond to what we know about Stoic thoughts about time either, and is the fabrication of Victor Goldschmidt, on whom Deleuze draws (see J. Sellars, 'An Ethics of the Event: Deleuze's Stoicism', *Angelaki*, vol. 11, no. 3, 2006, pp. 157-71, at p. 169 n35).
 6. On Deleuze and Stoic ethics, see *ibid.*
 7. See *LS* 174/149.
 8. Diogenes Laertius 6.63.
 9. See e.g. Epictetus, *Dissertationes* 1.9.1 (quoted below). For a general survey of the idea in antiquity, see H.C. Baldry, *The Unity of Mankind in Greek Thought*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1965.
 10. See Diogenes Laertius 6.38.
 11. For the positive content of Cynic cosmopolitanism, see J.L. Moles, 'Cynic Cosmopolitanism', in *The Cynics*, ed. R.B. Branham and M.-O. Goulet-Cazé, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1996, pp. 105-20.
 12. The surviving evidence is discussed in D. Dawson, *Cities of the Gods: Communist Utopias in Greek Thought*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1992, ch. 3.
 13. The most significant study is probably M. Schofield, *The Stoic Idea of the City*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991. The fragments are collected and translated in J. Sellars, 'Stoic Cosmopolitanism and Zeno's *Republic*', *History of Political Thought*, vol. 28, no. 1, 2007, pp. 1-29.
 14. Diogenes Laertius 7.4.
 15. For examples of the Platonic interpretation, see A.-H. Chroust, 'The Ideal Polity of the Early Stoics', *Review of Politics* 27, 1965, pp. 173-83; Schofield, *The Stoic Idea of the City*; and C. Rowe, 'The *Politeiai* of Zeno and Plato', in *Zeno of Citium and His Legacy*, ed. T. Scaltsas and A.S. Mason, Municipality of Larnaca, Larnaca, 2002, pp. 293-308. For the claim that Zeno's title alone must imply a close relationship with Plato's *Republic*, see Rowe, 'The *Politeiai* of Zeno and Plato', p. 295.
 16. See Plutarch, *Vita Lycurgi* 31.1-2.
 17. See Diogenes Laertius 7.33.
 18. Chroust, 'The Ideal Polity of the Early Stoics', pp. 179-80, argues that all foreign travel would be banned in Zeno's ideal state and so this small community of sages would be totally isolated from the outside world.
 19. See Diogenes Laertius 7.32-3; 7.131.
 20. Plutarch, *De Alexandri Magni Fortuna aut Virtute* 29a-b.
 21. See e.g. Diogenes Laertius 7.121.
 22. In his 1910 article for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* Peter Kropotkin described Zeno as 'the best exponent of Anarchist philosophy in ancient Greece' (repr. in P. Kropotkin, *Anarchism and Anarchist Communism*, Freedom Press, London, 1987, p. 10). For a cursory account of Cynicism and Stoicism within the anarchist tradition, see P. Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism*, HarperCollins, London, 1992, pp. 68-71.
 23. Seneca, *De Otio* 4.1.
 24. Epictetus, *Dissertationes* 1.9.1-2.
 25. Marcus Aurelius 4.4; see also 2.16, 3.11, 4.3, 10.15.
 26. See Cicero, *Academica* 2.137, where it is reported that, according to Diogenes, Rome was not a real 'city' (*nec haec urbs nec in ea civitas*) at all.
 27. See D. Obbink and P.A. Vander Waerdt, 'Diogenes of Babylon: The Stoic Sage in the City of Fools', *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 32, 1991, pp. 355-96, at p. 376.
 28. Here I follow the analysis of Diogenes' cosmopolitanism in J.L. Moles, 'The Cynics and Politics', in A. Laks and M. Schofield, eds, *Justice and Generosity*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995, pp. 129-58, at pp. 141-2. It seems equally applicable to later Stoic cosmopolitanism.
 29. Plutarch, *De Alexandri Magni Fortuna aut Virtute* 329a-b.
 30. See M. Ostwald, *Nomos and the Beginnings of the Athenian Democracy*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1969, p. 54.

31. See E. Laroche, *Histoire de la racine nemen grec ancien*, Klincksieck, Paris, 1949, pp. 115–29.
32. See H.G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek–English Lexicon*, rev. H.S. Jones, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1940, p. 1180.
33. See Laroche, *Histoire de la racine nemen grec ancien*, cited in both *DR* and *MP*.
34. Both senses of *nomos* discussed here share this root; see Liddell and Scott, *A Greek–English Lexicon*, p. 1180, and Laroche, *Histoire de la racine nemen grec ancien*, pp. 24–5.
35. See Liddell and Scott, *A Greek–English Lexicon*, pp. 1178–9.
36. Deleuze has been accused of relying on metaphors by a number of commentators, notably A. Badiou, *Deleuze: La clameur de l’Être*, Hachette, Paris, 1997, p. 8. For a defence of Deleuze against such charges, see M. De Landa, ‘Immanence and Transcendence in the Genesis of Form’, in *A Deleuzian Century?*, ed. I. Buchanan, Duke University Press, Durham NC, 1999, pp. 119–34, at p. 121.
37. Deleuze’s principal source, Laroche, *Histoire de la racine nemen grec ancien*, refers to an enormous number of ancient textual examples, including many in Plutarch’s *Moralia*, but I have not found a reference to this particular passage.
38. See *DR* 54/309.
39. See J.-P. Vernant, *Myth and Thought among the Greeks*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1983.
40. See *ibid.*, pp. 212–34; note also Vernant’s *The Origins of Greek Thought*, Methuen, London, 1982, p. 99: ‘The city was thus no longer organized according to ... blood ties. Tribes and demes were established on a purely geographical basis; they brought together dwellers on the same soil rather than blood relatives.’
41. See *ibid.*, pp. 230–31, where he writes that Plato ‘specifies how to organize the space of the city-state to conform with his laws’, and Plato himself offers the following example: ‘twelve regions ... [divided] into five thousand and forty allotments ... [then] bisected’ (*Laws* 745e). Vernant goes on to suggest that this model of ‘political space treated geometrically’ (*ibid.*, p. 233) finds its most complete expression with Plato despite his other divergences from the model of the classical city.
42. The hydraulic/solid and vortical/linear characteristics originate with Lucretius and Archimedes, and Deleuze and Guattari draw upon the discussion of them both in M. Serres, *La naissance de la physique dans le texte de Lucrèce*, Minuit, Paris, 1977; the becoming/eternal opposition comes from Plato’s *Timaeus* 28–9; the problematic/theoremaic distinction comes from Proclus, in *Primum Euclidis Elementorum Librum* (translated in G.R. Morrow, *Proclus, A Commentary on the First Book of Euclid’s Elements*, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 1970). See *MP* 446–64/361–74.
43. See Proclus, in *Primum Euclidis Elementorum Librum* Prol. 8; Morrow, *Proclus*, pp. 62–7. For Deleuze and Guattari, see *MP* 447–8/362 with 448 n16/554 n21. Deleuze also draws upon this text by Proclus in *DR* 211/163 and *LS* 69/54.
44. Proclus, *ibid.*; Morrow, *Proclus*, p. 64.
45. *Ibid.*
46. See Plato, *Timaeus* 28–9 and *MP* 457–8/369 with 457 n29/555 n34. Deleuze also discusses this in *DR* 167/128 where he describes this ‘terrifying’ counter-model as ‘the anti-Platonism at the heart of Platonism’.
47. Serres, *La naissance de la physique dans le texte de Lucrèce*, p. 136.
48. In *MP* Deleuze and Guattari have no problem with the word ‘cosmos’ (see e.g. *MP* 402–3/326–7) but they supplement it with ‘chaosmos’ in order to stress that their cosmos is not rationally ordered in the way that the Greeks understood *kosmos*.
49. Of course, following the example of De Landa, one might be able to develop a quite different social and political philosophy using other parts of Deleuze’s philosophy, but this will not necessarily be consistent with Deleuze’s explicit comments on politics discussed here.
50. Although I do not subscribe to all of the details of Peter Hallward’s complex and sophisticated interpretation of Deleuze’s ontology, I would agree with him that Deleuze’s political attitude is utopian and ultimately indifferent to traditional politics (*Out of this World*, p. 162).

Sources

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CHAPTER 1	<i>Radical Philosophy</i> 75, 1996
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CHAPTER 8	<i>Radical Philosophy</i> 158, 2009
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