The fate of the body politic

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Whatever happened to the idea of the body politic? For those interested in social and political thought this is a pertinent question, since these fields have in recent years become saturated with discussions of the body. The loss of confidence in previously established categories has provoked a widespread return to the body as the basis for some new understanding of society and politics. As Terry Eagleton once commented, there will soon be more bodies in contemporary criticism than on the fields of Waterloo.[1] For the new somatic, however, it is of course the *individual* human body that is the issue. This is a far cry from the body that once dominated discussions of politics and society, namely the body politic.

That the analogy of the body politic was one of the most basic and fundamental of pre-modern thought is well known. John of Salisbury, for example, defines a republic as 'a sort of body':

> The position of the head in the republic is occupied … by a prince subject only to God and to those who act in His place on earth.… The place of the heart is occupied by the senate.… The duties of the ears, eyes and mouth are claimed by the judges and governors of provinces. The hands coincide with officials and soldiers. Those who always assist the prince are comparable to the flanks. Treasurers and record keepers … resemble the shape of the stomach and intestines … Furthermore, the feet coincide with peasants perpetually bound to the soil.[2]

Such a comparison was so common in the centuries that followed that virtually all political thinkers used it in some form or another. Although the political metaphor of the body had a heritage stretching back to antiquity, it received a new lease of life by being combined with the medieval doctrine of the king's two bodies.

> The King has in him two Bodies, *viz.*, a Body natural, and a Body politic. His Body natural (if it be considered in itself) is a Body mortal, subject to all Infirmities that come by Nature or Accident, to the Imbecility of Infancy or old Age, and to the like Defects that happen to the natural Bodies of other People. But his Body politic is a Body that cannot be seen or handled, consisting of Policy and Government, and constituted for the Direction of the People, and the Management of the public weal, and this Body is utterly void of Infancy, and old Age, and other natural Defects and Imbecilities, which the Body natural is subject to.[3]

In this doctrine Ernst Kantorowicz claimed to find the solution to one of the most interesting features of sovereign power: its ability to be passed from one sovereign to another. Lawyers and political thinkers were at this stage formulating the idea of the state as a perpetual corporation, but were either unable or unwilling to separate state and monarch. Embodied in the king, the perpetual nature of sovereignty had to allow the royal *dignitas* to survive the physical person of its bearer; it is this that the doctrine of the king's two bodies enables, and that is captured in the phrases 'the king never dies' and 'the king is dead, long live the King'. Moreover, the formula 'the king never dies' expresses the sovereign power's *continuity* to the extent that it expresses the *absolute* nature of that power. Similar arguments play a central role in Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1651). For Hobbes the Leviathan state 'is but an Artificiall Man', a 'Body Politique' in which sovereignty is the soul, 'giving life and motion to the whole body', the judiciary are the joints, councillors are the memory, concord is health and forms of discord are sickness.[4] The fact that arguments such as Hobbes's were functional to the development of monarchic absolutism should not distract us from the general point that the idea of the body politic was central to the formation of the modern state and ideas about sovereignty.

Many scholars have argued that the metaphor of the body politic is now out of place in political and

theoretical discourse. A recent work from within the new somatic tells us that 'under the twin suspicions of theoretical insufficiency and political perniciousness' the metaphor of the body politic has lost its appeal.[5] Others have claimed that 'the imagery of the body politic no longer delights and instructs', or simply that the metaphor had lost much of its point by the mid-seventeenth century and suffered further decline thereafter.[6] Scholars have described the cultural and ideological transition that took place in the eighteenth century as a shift away from an iconic system centred on the body politic (especially the body of the king), to a logocentric universe that enshrined the word of law, in which Law became king and in which an impersonal bureaucratic sovereign state came to replace a form of sovereignty embodied in the person of the monarch. This has been presented as the culmination of three related processes.

First came the rise of liberalism and, in particular, the liberal contribution to contract theory. For example, although John Locke describes the contract as the formation of a 'body politick', he resists granting this body a rationale of its own. In aiming to preserve the individual bodies and property of citizens, Locke downplays any idea of the body politic as an entity in its own right. Second, there was the important symbolic effect of the French Revolution. In what is taken to be the defining revolutionary gesture of the period – the beheading of the king – the revolutionaries are said to have depersonalized sovereign power, obliterated the question of charisma from the political agenda, and thus removed the mystery of sovereignty in one fell swoop. Third, there was the replacement of organicist accounts of society and the state with mechanistic accounts. One of the standard claims made about the notion of the body politic is that the analogy was destroyed by the emergent empirical and mechanistic approaches of the seventeenth century, so that 'society as an organism' came to be replaced with the idea of 'society as a mechanism'.

More recently, an argument developed by Claude Lefort, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, and appropriated to a lesser degree by many others, connects the demise of the metaphor of the body politic to the rise of bourgeois democracy from the late eighteenth century. They claim that as a political discourse, democracy has little intellectual time for an essentially pre-modern metaphor such as that of the body politic, and that as a regime democracy is one in which any notion of the organic unity of the polity is dissolved. Lefort, for example, argues that 'the democratic revolution … burst out when the body of the king was destroyed, when the body politic was decapitated and when, at the same time, the corporeality of the social was dissolved. There then occurred … a "disincorporation" of individuals.'[7] Reiterating Lefort's point, Simon Critchley adds:

> with the advent of democracy in the French revolution, the place of power becomes an empty space. In democracy, those who govern cannot incarnate power.… In democracy power is not occupied by a king, a party leader, an egocrat or a *Führer*, rather it is ultimately empty; no one holds the place of power. Democracy entails a disincorporation of the body politic, which begins with a literal or metaphorical act of decapitation.[8]

Democracy, on this view, involves what Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy describe as 'the desubstantialization of the body politic'.[9] The general argument being made by these writers is that the *rationalization* and *modernization* associated with the rise of democracy entail a *disincorporation* of politics and thus an end, at least temporarily, to the metaphor of the body.

I say 'temporarily' because what is at stake in the account of the eclipse of the body politic is our understanding not just of democracy, but of fascism too. Lefort's work on the revolutions of the late eighteenth century, for example, is a pretext for his analysis of 'totalitarian' regimes, and Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy's aim is to show that fascism constitutes the frenzied re-substantialization of the social body as a form of reincorporation, or reincarnation, or reorganization of the body politic. The same is true of Critchley's intentions, and Žižek, Laclau and Mouffe, and John Keane all make similar points.[10] It is worth noting that Kantorowicz's highly influential research on the king's two bodies can in fact be read as an attempt to grasp the implications of the political theology of fascism, especially that developed by Carl Schmitt.[11]

In what follows I shall take issue with this reading of the fate of the body politic. I shall argue that far from signalling the decline of the body as a central trope of political thought, it is in fact only with the *advent* of the democratic revolutions that the metaphor of the body comes into its own. Far from there being a disincorporation of sovereignty in the late eighteenth century, what took place was *incorporation in a new form*, a form appropriate to the bourgeois democratic polities that were to emerge from the democratic and intellectual revolutions set in motion in the late eighteenth century. This was the body of the people, or the social body. This is not just an exercise in the history of ideas, however, for I shall also argue that this reconsideration of the fate of the body politic allows us

to rethink some of the connections between bourgeois democracy and fascism – connections founded on the corporeal register. I shall be arguing, in effect, that fascism's use of the corporeal metaphor is less a revival of a pre-modern idea and more a radicalization of the bourgeois notion of the social body. Moreover, I will conclude by suggesting that the prevalence of the corporeal register in the language of both bourgeois democracy and fascism is symptomatic of their obsession with order, and that the political doctrine which allows us to move beyond this register is one which fails to share the obsession with order: Marxism.

Social bodies

At the start of the eighteenth century the term 'society' referred either to the leading 'social' circles in courtly or sophisticated life, or to a legally recognized association, a relatively small organized grouping of people. Otherwise, it was a barely used concept. The same can be said for the adjectival form 'social'. During the eighteenth century and the rise of the Enlightenment, however, both 'society' and 'social' came to play far more important roles in intellectual argument. Significant here is Rousseau's contribution to the theory of the state. While it is true that Hobbes and Locke both talk about the importance of contracts in creating a sovereign power, their main concern is with either the might of the Leviathan or the limits of government. With Rousseau, however, one gets the first sustained reflection on the contract as a *social* phenomenon. Rousseau was one of the first writers to use 'society' as a key concept and 'social' as an adjective in a systematic way – as witnessed by his consideration of 'social order', the 'social system', the 'social bond' and the 'social spirit', as well as the title of his most famous work.[12] It was during this period that the term 'society' gradually expanded to include all social units, and the term 'social' came to designate forms of relations which were somehow more fundamental than political or legal relations.[13] In Britain during the Scottish Enlightenment, references to 'social intercourse', 'social war', 'social pleasure', 'social duties', 'social virtues', 'social good humour', and so on, became common.[14]

However, this new 'society' and set of 'social' relations were still understood in terms of the language of the body. Rousseau sums up his main argument as being for an 'act of association creat[ing] a corporate and collective body', adding that 'this public person, so formed by the union of all other persons, formerly took the name of *city*, and now takes that of *Republic* or *body politic*'.[15] Because the body politic is identified with the sovereign, however, and because sovereignty lies with 'the people', Rousseau is pushed into identifying the body politic with the people. 'The people' is thus understood as a body (*corps du peuple*) in its own right. 'Car la volonté est générale, ou elle ne l'est pas; elle est celle du corps du peuple, ou seulement d'une partie' ('will either is general, or it is not; it is the will of the body of the people, or only of part of it').[16] But because Rousseau's work is equally saturated with the language of the social, the body of the people is conceived of as nothing more or less than the *social body* (a fact sometimes obscured by translations of *corps social* as 'body politic' rather than 'social body'). Thus he criticizes political theorists for engaging in conjuring tricks in which 'après avoir démembré le corps social par un prestige digne de la foire, ils rassemblent les pieces on ne sait comment' ('after first dismembering the social body by an illusion worthy of a fair, they reassemble the pieces together we know not how').[17]

When Rousseau discusses the social body elsewhere it is, unsurprisingly, in terms identical to his comments on sovereignty and the body politic more generally. He comments, for example, on the undertakings which bind us to the social body, the will of the social body, the inalienability of right within the social body: 'Les engagemens qui nous lient au corps social ne sont obligatoires que parce qu'ils sont mutuels' ('the undertakings which bind us to the social body are obligatory only because they are mutual'); 'Lumieres publique résulte l'union de l'entendement et de la volonté dans le corps social ('public enlightenment leads to the union of understanding and will in the social body').[18] And in *Émile*, published the same year as *The Social Contract*, he comments that the value of the citizen 'est dans son rapport avec l'entier, qui est le corps social' ('depends upon the whole, that is, on the social body').[19]

A similar development can be found in Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*. Smith uses the term 'body politic' in either the context of regimes and forms of governing which he opposes, such as monopoly and mercantilism, or in discussing the works of writers he is critical of, such as Quesnai.[20] Otherwise, the terms 'body politic' and 'political body' make no appearance in *The Wealth of Nations*. Instead, another image takes centre stage: the 'great body of the people'. This 'great body of the people' is not identical to the old body politic. Most of Smith's uses of the phrase leave its meaning undefined, but it would appear that the great body of the people is the labouring subgroup of the 'whole body of the people'. After outlining the

misery brought about by the division of labour – it makes men stupid, renders them incapable of taking part in rational conversation, and leaves them lacking in 'generous, noble, or tender sentiment' – Smith comments that 'in every improved and civilized society this is the state into which the labouring poor, that is, the great body of the people, must necessarily fall'. The subgroup is thus what would otherwise be known as the working class. The 'whole body of the people', in contrast, refers to 'society' in general.[21]

The 'social body' and 'body of the people' are also central to the two great revolutions of the period. In number 39 of *The Federalist Papers* Madison defines a republic as

> a government which derives all its powers directly or indirectly from the great body of the people, and is administered by persons holding their offices during pleasure for a limited period, or during good behaviour. It is *essential* to such a government that it be derived from the great body of the society, not from an inconsiderable proportion or a favoured class of it.[22]

Similarly, in France leading revolutionaries framed their arguments concerning society and the people in terms taken from the register of corporeal discourse. The Abbé Sieyès's account of the Third Estate is developed on the basis of the new language of the social body of the citizenry. 'A political society cannot be anything but the whole body of the associates', he claims, in which the body is nothing less than 'the great body of the people', or 'the whole body of the citizens'. And this Third Estate, or rather the nation, 'demands nothing less than to make the totality of citizens a *single* social body'.[23] This logic of incorporation is pushed to its limit in Sieyès's account of representation, for which he is most widely known. For Sieyès, the Third Estate is the whole nation, an indivisible body, and the process which unites the great citizen body and the body of the National Assembly is representation. 'The deputy is member of the body of the Assembly and member of the body of the Nation for which he legislates.' Representation is thus a projection of a symbolic social body onto a real institutional body, of the eternal sovereign body of the people onto an active assembled body in which representation organically links the real body of the National Assembly to the symbolic body of the nation. In tandem with arguments such as these, the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen* (1789) was presented as a document to be placed 'before all the members of the Social body', while section 39 of the 1793 version of the *Declaration* claimed that 'there is oppression of the social body whenever a single one of its members is oppressed. There is oppression of each member whenever the social body is oppressed.'

Now, an important dimension to this development was the changing nature of 'the people', for this was a term which was coming to include the 'lower orders'

for the first time. 'The people' was beginning to be thought of as properly consisting of all the human members of a society: the social was thought to contain the poverty-stricken multitude. This in part explains why Smith's definition of the 'great body of the people' and Sieyès's definition of the Third Estate are economic definitions based on their conception of the importance of labour and industry – as 'society' was discovered it had to find a place for the labouring mass, the working class, and to conceptualize it as consisting of active members of the social body rather than as objects of pity at the bottom of the heap. In effect, the image of the social body helped turn the multitude into a people.

The significance of the fact that the social body contained the body of the people should not be underestimated. Gunn's claim that 'to say that the people had to be integrated into the body politic was an opinion requiring no more sophistication about organicism than had been present in the work of John of Salisbury in the twelfth century'[24] is to miss the novelty of this body on the political landscape. Rousseau, Smith and the republicans were in their different ways expressing the fact that what was occurring was a transition from the body of the king to the body of the people and, as a consequence, a dissolution of sovereignty into the larger body of the people. However, far from rejecting or undermining the metaphor of the body politic, the revolutionaries, by representing themselves as a political community united in one single body, rethought the trope of the body to help facilitate the shift from one regime to another: they moved from the 'body of the king' to the 'social body of citizens'. The *corpus politicum* became socialized; the *corpus* in question became society itself.[25] It was now the citizenry which embodied sovereignty. Playing on the doctrine of the king's two bodies, one might say that what we have seen is not the death of the metaphor of the body politic, but its demise; the metaphor lives on, in another form: *the sovereign body is dead, long live the sovereign body.*

Dirty bodies

If the argument in the preceding section has any substance, questions must be raised about the widespread assumption concerning the disappearance of the metaphor of the body politic. Moreover, questions must also be raised about any reading of fascism which assumes that it is purely a revival of 'premodern' and 'pre-democratic' ideas concerning the body metaphor.

In opposing 'mechanical' conceptions of society, defining modernity as the loss of organic community, and following through the logic of defining the state as a living organism, fascism aimed at achieving the policy of 'corporatism' and thus 'incorporation' – a doctrine, that is, of bodily containment – as a means for constructing a new order. Fascism aims at the defence and rejuvenation of the nation through its virilization, putting the 'life' back into the social body through the overcoming of the degenerate illnesses supposedly brought about by the 'mechanistic' doctrines of liberalism and communism. Fascist campaigns of terror reveal an image of the body politic in which the enemy of the people is regarded as a parasite or a waste product to be eliminated. As this is fairly well known; a few examples will suffice to make the point.

From the earliest days of the Nazi movement, Hitler and other leading Nazis employed medical terminology to describe communists, Jews, gypsies and other enemies. Jews, for example, were portrayed as 'a parasite in the body of other peoples'.[26] Other terms commonly used were malignant, a tuberculosis, a form of syphilis, a cancer, a tumour, plague, or growth. Communism, in the words of Goebbels, was a *Krebsgeschwür* that *muss ausgebrannt werden* – 'a tumour that must be burnt out'. The result was the medicalization of Nazism's enemies, formalized with the Nuremberg laws of 1935 which put German racial legislation on a biological basis. Thus the Nazis justified the establishment of a separate section for Germans on the streetcars of Warsaw on the grounds that this 'is not merely a question of principle; it is also, at least as far as Warsaw is concerned, a hygienic necessity', and the establishment of a Jewish ghetto at Lodz was justified as a measure necessary to protect against the dangers of epidemic disease. As Robert Procter has shown, the Nazi 'war on cancer' not only targeted the disease itself but also facilitated subtle and not-so-subtle changes in the language and uses of cancer research. The idea that the Jews were a 'diseased race' and 'disease incarnate' within the German body politic oscillated between political and medical discourse, to the extent that one can barely tell them apart. As one Nazi medical text of 1941 put it:

> The idea of the social parasite, as exemplified in the Jew amongst our people, can also be seen, symbolically, in the human body in many cases. The alien germ living in the body whose prosperity depends upon a conflict with a particular organ, a disharmony in the body, a disease – is this not the same role played by the Jew in the body of the people?

Conversely, while medical imagery was used to dehumanize racial and political undesirables, so cancer cells were sometimes described as Bolshevists, anarchists, spongers, rebellious, and breeders of chaos, while nascent tumours in actual bodies were described as a 'new race of cells, distinct from the other cell races of the body'.[27]

In Italy, Marinetti described communism as 'the exasperation of the bureaucratic cancer that has always wasted humanity', an originally German cancer defended by Bolshevik 'social doctors who are changing themselves into masters of a sick people'. In contrast, the Fascist project aims at 'defending every part of [the fatherland's] body'. This means 'amputating all the ideologies'. Mussolini described public security measures as 'social hygiene' and 'national prophylaxis': 'We remove [dangerous] individuals just as a doctor removes a contagious person from circulation.'[28] Such comments shed light on some of the everyday, non-lethal, but standard fascist practices, such as the force feeding of castor oil to anyone remotely disorderly or resistant to incorporation. After recounting some of the 'castor oil experiences' of ordinary civilians, including sometimes the force feeding of whole villages, Luisa Passerini notes that

> The ritual of castor oil drew on the parallel between the social and physical body. If the human body particularly lent itself to symbolizing the social system (so that control over it could be taken as an expression of social control), this was possible because the symbolic codes relating to the two bodies has a significant bearing on each other. By exploiting a forbidden bodily function, Fascist violence revitalized an age-old ritual, namely, inciting disorder to constitute new order, leaving a deep impression through the physical association of the social body with the individual human body.[29]

This medico-political terminology has remained a constant in fascist discourse.[30]

The historical outcome of such ideas is genocide in the guise of social hygiene: the social body assuring itself of its own identity by expelling its waste matter and averting the threat of any further intrusion by alien elements. It is a corporeal discourse, then, that supplies what Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy call the frenzied re-substantialization of the social body and what Lefort describes as the 'feverish' aspect to totalitarian societies.

> The enemy of the people is regarded as a parasite or a waste product to be eliminated.… The pursuit of the enemies of the people is carried out in the name of an ideal of social prophylaxis.… What is at stake is always the integrity of the body. It is as if the body had to assure itself of its own identity by expelling its waste matter.[31]

But while there is clearly a lot of mileage in such a reading of fascism, to present it as a revival of a political metaphor supposedly abandoned by bourgeois democracy is to assume too categorical a difference between liberal-democratic and fascist ways of thinking. It assumes that fascism has merely *revived* yet another *pre-modern* idea. Yet rethinking the emergence of bourgeois democracy as a *new form* of sovereign body rather than an abandonment of it enables us to note a remarkable consistency between fascist and non-fascist thinking concerning the social body, its 'diseases' and 'waste products'.

This is apparent from the earliest attempts to rethink the corporeal metaphor. Sieyès's account of the social body of the citizens, for example, utilizes the organic analogy to attack privilege, transforming the themes of disease and degeneration into a bourgeois revolutionary trope – the privileged class is like a 'horrible disease eating the living flesh on the body of some unfortunate man', 'a malignant tumour in the body of a sick man'.[32] But with the final triumph of the bourgeois class, medico-political discourse has been most obviously used against political enemies of another kind, a political enemy shared by both liberalism and fascism: communism. I shall limit myself to a few examples from the twentieth century. Churchill referred to communism as 'a pestilence more destructive of life than the Black Death or the Spotted Typhus'.

> Bolshevism is not a policy; it is a disease. It is not a creed; it is a pestilence. It presents all the characteristics of a pestilence. It breaks out with great suddenness; it is violently contagious; it throws people into a frenzy of excitement; it spreads with extraordinary rapidity; the mortality is terrible; so that after a while, like other pestilences, the disease tends to wear itself out.[33]

In America, Truman's attorney-general, J. Howard McGrath, claimed that each communist 'carries with him the germs of death for society', while Hubert Humphrey, senator and vice-president, described Chinese communism as 'a plague – an epidemic'.[34] J. Edgar Hoover's obsession with what he called the 'slimy wastes of communism' was connected to his wider obsession with the dirty body. Joel Kovel sums up Hoover's position:

> What is American is clean and innocent; what is alien, or Communist, is the introduction of 'slimy wastes' into the body politic. This preoccupation extended from 'filthy impulses' to a direct focus

> on 'dirt' itself, and its passage inside and outside the body. The director [of the FBI] became a man obsessed with defending both his own body and the body social from the intrusion of 'slimy wastes'. All of Hoover's ideological preoccupations – with keeping the innocents safe, with protecting America from aliens, with the 'lechery' and 'pollution' of Communism, with unwashed and promiscuous student radicals, and perhaps with that great American menace, the Black Stud – may be read as defences of the collective body against contamination.[35]

Influential figures behind US Cold War policy, such as George Kennan, articulated the same sort of idea. Kennan's 'Long Telegram' of 1946 and his famous 'X' article, 'The Sources of Soviet Conduct', of a year later, two of the most influential documents of the Cold War, declare the Soviet Union to be an 'impotent' and 'sterile' nation, 'bearing within itself germs of creeping disease' and 'the seeds of its own decay'. Outside the Soviet Union 'world communism is like a malignant parasite, which feeds only on diseased tissue', the strongest antidote to which is the 'health and vigor of our own society'. 'We must study it [the Soviet Union] with the same courage, detachment [and] objectivity … with which a doctor studies unruly and unreasonable individuals.'[36] This medicalizes the view of world communism just as much as fascism does, and suggests that political posturing has been replaced with the cool detachment of scientific judgement followed by action with the precision of a surgeon. And of course when surgeons cut, they do so minimally and clinically. The vision of the surgeon's knife evokes not the brutal image of a knife slashing a communist throat but the more civilized image of a surgeon's scalpel cutting out abnormality from an unhealthy body.[37]

The historical outcome of arguments such as Kennan's was the policy of 'containment', and it is worth pausing to reflect on what this means in relation to the discussion here. Because the body is a model which can stand for any bounded system its boundaries tend to represent spaces which are threatened or precarious. Bodily orifices thereby come to represent points of entry or exit to social units. The general interest in the body's apertures is replicated in the preoccupation with social exits and entrances, which easily come to be seen as escape routes and invasions.[38] This is the basis of the connection between foreignness and disease in the metaphor of the body. Thus when towards the end of the fifteenth and into the sixteenth centuries syphilis began its epidemic sweep through Europe, it was understood as essentially 'foreign'. The English, Italians and Germans referred to it as the French sickness ('French pox'), the French as the *morbus Germanicus*, the Poles as the German sickness, the Muscovites as the Polish sickness, the Flemish, Dutch and northwest Africans understood it as the Spanish sickness; the Portuguese called it the 'Castilian sickness', the Florentines thought it came from Naples, the Japanese understood it as either the

Chinese or Portuguese disease, while the people of the East Indies also thought it hailed from Portugal. A 1524 tract listed over two hundred names for the disease, each identifying it as originating in a specific foreign location.[39]

Similar points can be made about other major diseases such as plague and AIDS. But the general point is that although the perceived threats and aggression towards the body appear to come from *outside*, they are also frequently confused with threats *inside*. It is the nature of bodies – political, social, natural – that the distinction between inside and outside is never clear; this is the problem of the boundary. Madison, for example, claims that the state of Maryland 'persisted for several years … although the enemy remained the whole period at our gates, or rather in the very bowels of our country'.[40] The enemy here is constructed as occupying a place both at the gates and inside the territory: outside or at the border and yet also within the social body. This is what was (is?) at stake in the US policy of containment. There are thus two different meanings of containment, as Andrew Ross points out,

> one which speaks to a threat *outside* of the social body, a threat which therefore has to be isolated, in quarantine, and kept at bay from the domestic body; and a second meaning of containment, which speaks to the domestic *contents* of the social body, a threat internal to the host which must then be neutralized by being contained or 'domesticated'.[41]

It is for reasons such as these that the metaphor of the social body has lent itself so readily to the authoritarian trope of national security.

The concept of disease is never innocent, even in liberal minds. Talk of the diseases of the social body is at best an oversimplification of what is complex; at worst it is an invitation to slaughter. The conjunction of bodily and military metaphors – 'war on cancer', 'immunological defences', 'alien organisms', 'defence' and 'invasion', 'immunity' and 'vulnerability' – indicates the intimate connection between bodily tropes and the exercise of violence. To describe a social or political phenomenon as 'cancer' or 'plague' is an incitement to violence, for the point is not just to recognize the disease but to *expel it from the body politic*. Thus the attempt to incorporate medical ideas into politics via the notion of the social body is far from being an entirely fascist trope. Rather, it follows – logically and politically – from the corporeal model of social order. It is a trope within the dialectic of modernity – a dialectic which identifies the features fascism shares with bourgeois democracy as well as the features it reacts against[42] – which operates a *modernized* conception of the metaphor of the body incorporating the working class; it is this conception that emerges with the ascendant bourgeois notion of the social from the end of the eighteenth century. If we are to oppose fascism because of its embodied notion of the social, then, as Lefort et al. wish us to, so we should also oppose bourgeois democracy on the same grounds. As much as the fate of the body politic has been its democratization, so in this democratization it has retained its essentially authoritarian moment.

Beyond bodies

The reason bourgeois democracy and fascism share the common ground around the social body is because they share a fundamental concern: order. As I have argued elsewhere, terms such as 'contagion', 'dirt' and 'disease' hint at nothing less than the horror of disorder; as such they threaten the central feature of *all* states – the desire for order – and demand nothing less than the imposition of state power; this is the project of police. Moreover, when used in political ways, terms such as 'disease', 'dirt', 'contagion' are more often than not ways of conceptualizing the working class as dirty or contagious and thus disorderly.[43] But might it not be argued that the corporeal metaphor is one which permeates all forms of social and political thought? Perhaps all I have done here is show how prevalent the notion is. This doubt could be supported by anthropological research which purports to show the universality of the corporeal metaphor. Put another way: can one have a non-corporeal notion of the social?

Significantly, and the 'obstetric motif' aside (the new society born from the 'womb' of the old), one searches high and low in Marx's work for the corporeal model. Indeed, in his early works he makes great effort to debunk anything that smacks of the corporeal model, in both his critique of Hegel's philosophy of right – 'that the various aspects of an organism stand to one another in a necessary connection arising out of the nature of the organism is sheer tautology' – and his account of the *inorganic* body in the '1844 Manuscripts'.[44] Concomitantly, Marx resists developing an account of the bourgeois class as parasites, a disease or contagious.[45] The reasons for this are simple.

First, Marx's concept of the social is fundamentally opposed to that found in other doctrines. The common claim that Marx leaves no place for an independent and distinctive realm of the social imposes on Marx an essentially sociological – and non-Marxist – under-

standing of the social. If successful, this would result in trying to speak of 'the social body' in Marxist terms, and would be the end of Marxism. For Marx, 'the social' operates not as a descriptive category referring to something that can be somehow embodied, but as a category of critique: its essential function is to point to the alienated (i.e. unsocial) nature of human relations within bourgeois society. Marx's critique of both idealism and Feuerbachian materialism, for example, is founded on the idea of 'socialized humanity', and in many ways it is the social that functions as the universal in Marx's work – his understanding of the social and the proletariat as the universal class are analogous yet opposed to Hegel's conceptualization of the state and bureaucracy.[46] As such the notion of a 'social body', along with its related concerns over 'cancers', 'diseases' and 'purges', lies outside the theoretical contours of Marxist theory.

Second, Marx's work is not governed by the search for order. (Dis)order is an essentially bourgeois concern. The need to ascertain what is needed to fabricate and maintain order is the core feature of virtually every writer within the classical liberal and conservative traditions (and one which, sadly, many socialists have aped); necessarily so, since it is a core feature of ruling-class strategy. It is this that connects bourgeois thought with fascism, in a whole range of ways: the need for order in a society dominated by the everlasting uncertainty generated by capital accumulation; the understanding of the working class as an inherently disorderly class that needs to be brought to order; the presentation of any threats to the regime of capital as disorderly ('anarchy', 'chaos', etc.); and the link drawn between legality and order (the 'law and order' syndrome). Giving up these assumptions and links – moving beyond the parameters established by bourgeois ideology – would allow us also to move beyond the fetishism of order that permeates whole swathes of modern thought.

The corporeal model is just one of many means by which we are encouraged to succumb to this fetishism for order and commit ourselves to bourgeois notions of the social, as Marx realized. This, combined with the fate of the 'body politic' since its inception, should make it anathema to anyone who wishes to move beyond the bourgeois assumptions inherent in a depressingly large amount of social and political thought.

Notes

1. Terry Eagleton, 'It is Not Quite True That I Have a Body', *London Review of Books*, 27 May 1993, p. 7.
2. John of Salisbury, *Policraticus: Of the Frivolities of Courtiers and the Footprints of Philosophers* [1159], trans. Cary Nederman, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990, Bk. V, ch. 2, pp. 66–7.
3. Edmund Plowden, *Commentaries or Reports* [1571], cited in Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology*, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 1957, p. 7.
4. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* [1651], ed. Richard Tuck, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991, pp. 9–10.
5. Theodore R. Schatzki and Wolfgang Natter, 'Sociocultural Bodies, Bodies Sociopolitical', in Theodore R. Schatzki and Wolfgang Natter, eds, *The Social and Political Body*, Guilford Press, New York, 1996, p. 1.
6. David George Hale, *The Body Politic: A Political Metaphor in Renaissance English Literature*, Mouton, The Hague, 1971, p. 137; J.A.W. Gunn, *Beyond Liberty and Property: The Process of Self-Recognition in Eighteenth-Century Political Thought*, McGill–Queen's University Press, Kingston ON, 1983, p. 194; E.M.W. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1970.
7. Claude Lefort, *The Political Forms of Modern Society: Bureaucracy, Democracy, Totalitarianism*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1986, pp. 302–3; 'How Did You Become a Philosopher?', in Alan Montefiore, ed., *Philosophy in France Today*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1983, p. 85; *Democracy and Political Theory*, trans. David Macey, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1988, pp. 234–5.
8. Simon Critchley, 'Re-tracing the Political', in David Campbell and Michael Dillon, eds, *The Political Subject of Violence*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1993, p. 80. This idea of power as an 'empty space' is the same as that found in Laclau and Mouffe, who also develop it out of their reading of Lefort.
9. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, *Retreating the Political*, ed. Simon Sparks, Routledge, London, 1997, p. 127.
10. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, Verso, London, 1985, pp. 186–7; Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox*, Verso, London, 2000, p. 2; Slavoj Žižek, *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*, Verso, London, 1991, pp. 256–60; John Keane, *Václav Havel: A Political Tragedy in Six Acts*, Bloomsbury, London, 1999, pp. 501–4.
11. The key to *The King's Two Bodies* lies in its subtitle, *A Study in Medieval Political Theology*. Kantorowicz was in part responding to the intellectual origins of what he describes in the Preface as 'the horrifying experience of our own time' in which 'whole nations, the largest and the smallest, fell prey to the weirdest dogmas and in which political theologisms became genuine obsessions defying in many cases the rudiments of human and political reason'. The general reference is of course to fascism, but the more specific reference is to Schmitt's *Political Theology* (1922). In an article published two years before *The King's Two Bodies*, he is even more explicit: 'Under the impact of those exchanges between canon and civilian glossators and commentators … something came into being which then was called "Mysteries of State", and which today in a more generalizing sense is often termed "Political Theology"'; and he adds in a footnote that 'the expression [was] much discussed

in Germany in the early 1930s' ('Mysteries of State: An Absolutist Concept and Its Late Medieval Origins', *Harvard Theological Review* 48, 1955, pp. 65–91, p. 67).

12. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* [1762], in *The Social Contract and Discourses*, trans. G.D.H. Cole, Dent, London, 1973, pp. 165, 181, 214, 248, 273.
13. Johan Heilbron, *The Rise of Social Theory*, trans. Sheila Gogol, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1995, pp. 90–91.
14. Adam Smith, *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* [1776], ed. R.H. Campbell, A.S. Skinner and W.B. Todd, Liberty Fund, Indianapolis, 1979, pp. 144, 622, 668, 774, 782, 808.
15. Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, p. 175.
16. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Oeuvres Complètes, III: Du Contrat Social*, Gallimard, Paris, 1964, p. 369 (*The Social Contract*, p. 183); also see pp. 362, 404, 427 (*The Social Contract*, pp. 176, 217, 238).
17. Rousseau, *Oeuvres Complètes, III,* p. 370. Cole translates *corps social* here as 'body politic' (see *The Social Contract*, p. 183).
18. Ibid., pp. 373, 380 (*The Social Contract*, pp. 186, 193); also see pp. 374, 396 (*The Social Contract*, pp. 188, 209).
19. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Oeuvres Complètes, IV*, Gallimard, Paris, 1969, p. 249. One English translation of this, by Barbara Foxley, renders 'social body' as 'community' (*Émile*, Dent, London, 1966, p. 7).
20. Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, pp. 604, 605, 606, 674.
21. Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, p. 782. Elsewhere (p. 492) Smith refers to the 'great body of workmen'. More generally on the 'great body of the people', see *The Wealth of Nations*, pp. 11, 14, 99, 166, 173, 493, 494, 508, 523, 524, 533, 535, 538, 586, 617, 618, 649, 684, 696, 697, 705, 765, 781, 784, 786, 787, 789, 792, 798, 804, 813, 821, 823, 835, 844, 881, 947. On the 'whole body of the people', see pp. 96, 281, 508, 509, 517, 681, 693, 696, 785, 786, 787, 813.
22. James Madison, Alexander Hamilton and John Jay, *The Federalist Papers* [1788], no. 39, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1987, p. 255.
23. Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès, *What is the Third Estate?* [1789], trans. M. Blondel, Pall Mall Press, London, 1963, pp. 79, 83, 109, 123, 135, 165–6. Sieyès, *Deliberations to be Taken in the Assemblies of the Bailiwick*s [1789], in Murray Forsyth, *Reason and Revolution in the Political Thought of the Abbé Sieyè*s, Leicester University Press, New York, 1987, p. 81.
24. Gunn, *Beyond Liberty and Property*, p. 210.
25. Michel Foucault, 'Body/Power' (1975), in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, Harvester, Sussex, 1980, p. 55; Bryan S. Turner, *Max Weber: From History to Modernity*, Routledge, London, 1992, pp. 140, 158.
26. Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* [1925], Houghton-Mifflin, Boston MA, 1943, pp. 302–5.
27. Robert N. Proctor, *Racial Hygiene: Medicine Under the Nazis*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 1988, pp. 194–202; *The Nazi War on Cancer*, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 1999, pp. 46–7, 291.
28. F.T. Marinetti, 'Beyond Communism' [1920], in *Selected Writings*, ed. R.W. Flint, Secker & Warburg, London, 1972, pp. 148–57; Benito Mussolini, 'Address to the Chamber of Deputies, 26 May 1927' (the 'Ascension Day Speech'), cited in David G. Horn, *Social Bodies: Science, Reproduction, and Italian Modernity*, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 1994, p. 46.
29. Luisa Passerini, *Fascism in Popular Memory: The Cultural Experience of the Turin Working Class*, trans. Robert Lumley and Jude Bloomfield, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987, pp. 99, 223.
30. See, for example, the British fascist leader John Tyndall's descriptions of the 'cancer of liberalism' and the 'British sickness' in *The Eleventh Hour: A Call for British Rebirth*, Albion Press, London, 1988, pp. 117–40, 258–90.
31. Lefort, *Political Forms of Modern Society*, p. 298.
32. Sieyès, *What is the Third Estate?*, pp. 164, 174.
33. Winston Churchill, *Illustrated Sunday Herald*, 25 January 1920, and *The Times*, 10 November 1920, both cited in Fraser J. Harbutt, *The Iron Curtain: Churchill, America, and the Origins of the Cold War*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1986, pp. 25–7.
34. Joel Kovel, *Red Hunting in the Promised Land: Anticommunism and the Making of America*, Cassell, London, 1997, pp. 140, 186.
35. Ibid., p. 99.
36. George Kennan, 'The Long Telegram', in Thomas H. Etzold and John Lewis Gaddis, eds, *Containment: Documents on American Policy and Strategy, 1945–1950*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1978, pp. 50–63; X [George Kennan], 'The Sources of Soviet Conduct', *Foreign Affairs* 25, 1947, pp. 566–82.
37. Glenn D. Hook, 'The Nuclearization of Language: Nuclear Allergy as Political Metaphor', *Journal of Peace Researc*h 21, 1984, pp. 259–75; 262.
38. Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, Ark, London, 1984, pp. 4, 115; *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1973, pp. 98–9.
39. Claude Quétel, *History of Syphilis*, trans. Judith Braddock and Brian Pike, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1990, p. 16; Dorothy Nelkin and Sander S. Gilman, 'Placing Blame for Devastating Disease', *Social Research* 55, 1988, pp. 361–79, p. 365; Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor and Aids and Its Metaphors*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1991, p. 133. On AIDS as a 'foreign' disease, see Catherine Waldby, *AIDS and the Body Politic: Biomedicine and Sexual Difference*, Routledge, London, 1996, pp. 104, 142.
40. Madison, Hamilton and Jay, *Federalist Papers*, no. 38, p. 249.
41. Andrew Ross, 'Containing Culture in the Cold War', *Cultural Studies* 1, 1987, pp. 328–48, p. 331.
42. See Mark Neocleous, *Fascism*, Open University Press, Milton Keynes, 1997, p. 71.
43. Mark Neocleous, *The Fabrication of Social Order: A Critical Theory of Police Power*, Pluto Press, London, 2000, pp. 84–9.
44. Karl Marx, 'Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law' [1843], in Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 3, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1975, p. 11; 'Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844', *Collected Works, Vol. 3*, pp. 275–6.
45. He uses the term 'parasite' in 'The Civil War in France' but to describe the state, not a class.
46. See my 'From Civil Society to the Social', *British Journal of Sociology* 46, 1995, pp. 395–408.

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