Pli: The Warwick Journal of Philosophy

Pli is edited and produced by members of the Graduate School of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Warwick.

Volume 20. The Subject in Question

ISBN 1 897646 16 X
ISSN 1367 3769

Contributions, Orders, Subscriptions, Enquiries:
Pli, The Warwick Journal of Philosophy
Department of Philosophy
University of Warwick
Coventry CV4 7AL UK

Email: plijournal@googlemail.com
Website: www.warwick.ac.uk/philosophy/pli_journal/

Cover Image provided by www.eRiding.net

The Subject in Question

Contents

Pli 20 (2009), 1-27

The Truth of Humanity:

The Collective Political Subject in Sartre and Badiou

NINA POWER

1. The Collective Political Subject

The 'collective political subject' is a term I extract from a reading of Sartre, from Badiou, but also from elements of the work of Feuerbach and early Marx. It necessarily covers over certain major differences in their thinking, but attempts to unite them in a common trajectory that reveals the political implications of any philosophical discussion of the 'subject'. The impetus behind the construction of this concept of the collective subject is partly provided by the following insight from Balibar, which is located in his critique of Heidegger's phenomenological and ontological attack on humanism. Balibar claims that "[Heidegger] proves totally unable to see that the history of metaphysics, being intimately connected with the question "What is Man?", is also originally intricated with the history of politics and political thought".[1] This 'original intrication' entails that both philosophical terms such as 'subject' and originally political and anti-theological projects like the humanism of Hegelians and post-Hegelians in the 1840s must be understood in their philosophical and political proximity.

But what is the import of the term 'collective' here? It is, in some ways, again something of an imposition, a construction extracted out of the insights gleaned from the four figures mentioned above. Sartre, in particular, in fact gives the word 'collective' (*collectif*) to the serial multiplicity of individuals whose unity is a passive synthesis. In other

1 Balibar, 'Subjection and Subjectivation', *Supposing the Subject*, ed. Joan Copjec (London: Verso, 1994), p. 7.

words, in his terminology, the notion of the collective is actually *opposed* to the notion of a group, as it is used to describe a collection of atomised, 'serial', individuals united only from outside in the midst of scarcity.[2] Nevertheless, in my elaboration of the concept, I am using the term 'collective' to include the structure of Sartre's group-in-fusion. Why? There is, I would argue, nothing inherently distinct about the *term* 'collective', such that Sartre's depiction of it as serial would have to be retained. It also makes clearer the conceptual links with the other thinkers. Badiou's later 'subject' of politics is described as a 'collective' subject; Feuerbach's notion of humanity is collective in the sense that thought and sensuousness are man's generic essence, that which reveals to humanity its power and potentiality across the species. Feuerbach's conception of thought is furthermore something 'done by or belonging to all the members of a group', as the usual definition of 'collective' would have it. This 'undecidability' between doing and belonging may be seen as something of a weakness, an attempt to fudge what the collective political subject *does* with what it *possesses* or what it is capable of. We may remember in this respect Marx's materialist criticisms of Feuerbach's residual idealism, which precisely concern an attack on an abstract justification of the active side of consciousness, without the proposal of a similar comprehension of the objective nature of human activity (in the first of the 'Theses on Feuerbach').

The collective political subject we are dealing with here is thus neither straightforwardly reducible to 'man's essence' (thought, consciousness, the capacity to think the infinite, etc.) nor a question of pure activity (the mob or the masses seething in a seemingly incomprehensible fury), but rather something capable of being seen from two sides – both inside and outside. Sartre's claim, that men and women are "[u]niversal by the singular universality of human history, singular by the universalising singularity of [their] projects," such that they "require being studied from both ends"[3], is the methodological presupposition behind the notion of the relation between the passivity and the activity of the collective subject at stake here.

2 Sartre may also have felt it impolitic to use the term 'collective' positively in the age of Stalinist 'collectivisation'.

3 Sartre, *The Family Idiot*, trans C. Cosman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 16.

Obviously major differences remain between all of the thinkers I am claiming are concerned with the notion of the collective political subject. The crucial difference between Feuerbach's philosophical anthropology and Sartre and Badiou's presentation of a 'novel' upsurge via the group (Sartre) and the axiomatic definition of the political subject (Badiou) is one of essence versus emergence, and the 'consciousness' of this subject versus its quasi-mathematical definition – although this article is in part an attempt to demonstrate that the two positions are not really as opposed as they might at first seem. In a recent interview, Badiou makes the following claim: "I must say that in effect [my] notion of event finds its genesis ... in the descriptions of the group-in-fusion, and particularly all the episodes of the French Revolution interpreted by Sartre in this way."[4] There is much in this brief statement. It is clear that Badiou follows the form of Sartre's description of the group, but will diverge from his portrayal over the consequences of the group's emergence. The structure of the group cannot, for Sartre, maintain the brilliance and unity of its initial formation, which means that terror and finally a return to seriality are the necessary consequences of revolt. As a description of the failures of the Communist project under the bureaucratisation of Stalinism, it works very well. But Badiou is responding to a different political imperative – not that of attempting to explain Stalinism, but of trying to present and conceptualise the continuation of politics via the event's creation of subjects in a 'post-Communist' world. Whilst both are concerned with an analysis of collective political events, Sartre in effect primarily describes the moment of rupture, whereas Badiou's emphasis is on the way in which the collective subject holds true to a political event, and indeed, is actually constructed by it.[5]

The term 'collective' also has a negative strength: it avoids predetermining the nature of the subject. It is not necessarily a readily identifiable 'set' of subjects (this is the problem that Badiou tried to overcome in his early work in *Théorie du sujet* with his working

4 Badiou, interview with Emmanuel Barot, 'Jean-Paul Sartre and Marxism: Theoretical and Political Companions' (2006, unpublished manuscript).

5 Badiou's position is, in fact, precisely what is the absolutely impossible in politics for Merleau-Ponty: "No politics responds to an event simply by "yes" or "no"." Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'Sartre and Ultrabolshevism', *The Debate Between Sartre and Merleau-Ponty*, ed. Jon Stewart (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998), p. 361.

class/proletariat discussion, which he ultimately removes in his later work by moving to a discussion of generic humanity). It is also not 'Man' per se, with its biologistic and sexist implications, as the collective contains within it an active subjective element that counters any naturalistic definition. Moreover, the notion of the collective preserves the undecidability between doing and belonging which is central to the concerns with both politics and rationality in all the thinkers under study here. Rather, as in Sartre's group-in-fusion, in which the common structures of everyday life and seriality are understood in a completely different, unified form – such that the group possesses an entirely novel structure – the term 'collective' neatly captures a quantitative and qualitative two-sidedness. The collective has its own logic, which is irreducible to a static or quantitative notion of humanity. We cannot point to the history of humanity and say 'here is the material for a collective', but we can point to instances of collective politics in which universalising projects have come to determine the behaviour of individuals in an oriented way.

2. Sartre's Collective Political Subject

Sartre's analysis of the group-in-fusion is essentially an attempt to make intelligible those rare moments of collective political activity, in which each member feels he or she recognises and internalises a shared goal. Sartre's project in the *Critique* is also presented as the quest to analyse what could be 'the truth of humanity', as described in its prolegomenon, *Search for a Method*. This 'truth of humanity' is the overcoming of various kinds of alienation from matter, other people and indeed, the dialectic that sustains the alienation in the first place. This 'truth', Sartre argues, is revealed in those rare moments of collective political action. He thus links the collective to humanity via historical moments of political action. The accusations of 'humanism' that greeted the publication of the *Critique* in France in 1960 sought to portray Sartre's analysis as outdated, outmoded and hubristic. But what should really be regarded as the true content of the debate over humanism is the question of the *subject* – and it is again here that the true import of Sartre's late work must be sought.

Sartre's project cannot be understood as a social ontology, even as it seeks to comprehend the structures of various social phenomena. It is not

concerned, therefore, with a notion of subject as substance, as in the early Aristotelian definition. He instead demonstrates, ultimately, how one phenomenon cannot be said to contain the necessity for the other: "the necessity of the group is not present *a priori* in the gathering."[6] There is a fundamental question that follows from this refusal however, concerning the nature of the group-in-fusion, as that briefly existing collective which achieves the structure capable of producing what Sartre names the 'common individual', or indeed, as noted above, the 'truth' of man. As he puts it: "in the climate of fraternity-terror, indeed, *man is born* as a pledged member of a sovereign group."[7] The group is the only truly 'human' social form for Sartre, the only briefly non-alienated structure in his whole critical edifice. Why, however, does Sartre think that the movement from the serial (individuals determined in alterity by the others) to the group (an ensemble whose members are determined by the others in reciprocity), is only possible on the basis of an abrupt break? There are two main reasons. First, there is Sartre's anti-organicism, and second, his commitment to a notion of scarcity.

The former serves both to separate his critical project from sociological generalisation (and its presentation of externally-defined classes and groups) *and* from the determinist dogmatic Marxism of Stalinism and the PCF. Anti-organicism here severs the projection of the dialectic *beyond* the relation of humanity to matter and into the realms of nature (encapsulated in Engels' claim in *Anti-Duhring* that "the negation of the negation really does take place in both kingdoms of the organic world"[8]). In this sense, Sartre is faithful to the Kantian limitations of his *critical* analysis, restricting his progressive-regressive method to the dialectics of praxis between humans, and humanity and things, such that the regressive "will move in the opposite direction to the synthetic movement of the dialectic *as a method* (that is to say, in the opposite direction to Marxist thought [production, groups, contradiction, individual]); it will set out from the immediate, that is to say from the individual fulfilling himself in his abstract *praxis* … [the] totality of his

6 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, vol. 1, trans. A. Sheriden-Smith, ed. Jonathan Rée (London, Verso: 2004), p. 345. Henceforth *CDR* I and vol. 2 *CDR* II.

7 *CDR* II, p. 152.

8 Engels, *Anti-Duhring*, Part 1, XIII, 'Dialectics: The Negation of the Negation', (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1947), p. 502.

practical bonds with others ... the absolute concrete: historical man."[9] Sartre nevertheless recognises the temptation of two prevalent forms of unification that would attempt to rival his presentation of dialectical reason. The first is a form of Hegelianism:

> Obviously everything would be simpler in a transcendental idealist dialectic: the movement of integration by which every organism contains and dominates its inorganic pluralities would be presented as transforming itself, at the level of social plurality, into an integration of individuals into an organic totality.[10]

Against this conception of totality, Sartre posits the conception of totalisation (and we must hear in this a critique of Lukács' use of the term totality), according to which "since totalising knowledge cannot be thought of as attaining ontological totalisation as a new totalisation of it, dialectical knowledge must itself be a moment of the totalisation".[11] The process includes itself, dialectically, in its own unfolding, which renders impossible the separation of parts and whole, or, indeed, any conception of a 'whole' at all. The second unity that Sartre attempts to avoid is a kind of Spinozist or Leibnizian monism which he describes in the following way:

> The monism which *starts from the human world* and *situates* man in Nature is the monism of materiality. This is the only monism which is realist, and which removes the *purely theological* temptation to contemplate Nature 'without alien addition'. It is the only monism which makes man neither a molecular dispersal nor a being apart, the only one which *starts* by defining him by his *praxis* in the general milieu of animal life.[12]

9 *CDR* I, p. 52.
10 Ibid., p. 345.
11 Ibid., p. 47.
12 Ibid., pp. 180-181.

The kind of monism Sartre criticises here he sees as not allowing for praxis to be anything other than predetermined. "We must reject organicism *in every form*."[13]

3. Sartre's Anti-Ontology

Sartre's later concept of the subject must be understood in terms of his break with phenomenology, that is both with the phenomenological subject and with the Heideggerian emphasis on ontology. Despite the earlier ontological programme of Sartre's work (*Being and Nothingness* is subtitled "An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology"), by the time of the *Critique*, Sartre holds that his work, both in his method and in his descriptions, is fundamentally a non-ontological exercise.[14] Why?

13 Ibid., p. 348.
14 Not only had Sartre broken with Heidegger's disdain for the collective, but he has also attempted to come to terms with some of the more severe criticisms levelled at him by his erstwhile friend and collaborator, Merleau-Ponty, whose chapter on Sartre in *The Adventures of the Dialectic* sought to undermine Sartre's work of the early 1950s (the essays collected as *The Communists and Peace*). In his piece, Merleau-Ponty attacks what he sees as a lack of mediation in Sartre, arguing that Sartre simply replaces the consciousness of *Being and Nothingness* with a Cartesian and ultra-Bolshevik vision of *praxis*. Indeed, on the basis of this Cartesian reading, Merleau-Ponty explicitly attacks Sartre for his exclusion of the dimension of sociality and inter-relations, especially institutions. These criticisms form the background to Sartre's care in the *Critique* in stressing the dialectical nature of his later project. Merleau-Ponty's own call for a 'new left', which he sees as a new liberalism that accepts the fundamental principle of parliamentary democracy, is an unacceptable alternative for Sartre at this point in the 1950s, revealing an inability to take sides properly on the question of Communism. What Sartre was obliged to do, therefore, in the *Critique*, was use existentialism to unblock the 'stopped' really existing socialism, and the abuses of Marxism, without letting the Cartesianism of the earlier project seep back in and reify the dialectical comprehension he was trying to pursue. He thus introduces a hierarchy of mediations which make up the *Critique* and allows it to grasp the process which produces the person within a given society at a given moment. As he puts it in the Introduction to the *Critique*, "not to reject Marxism in the name of a third path [Merleau-Ponty's] or of an idealist humanism, but to reconquer man within Marxism" ('Problem of Method', trans. H. Barnes, New York, Vintage Books: 1968 [orig. 1960 as preface to the *Critique*], p. 83). As Badiou puts it, "Sartre

Because of the role and centrality of the terms *praxis* and intelligibility. It is not that Sartre denies that there are various forms of relation, it is simply that he refuses to establish in advance whether there is an *ontological* region of totalisation (the process of understanding and making history), or to say what the total 'material' of history must be. In fact, Sartre obviates the question of definition by posing the problem of the structure of such a totality as a question to be borne in mind throughout: "If dialectical rationality really is a logic of totalisation, how can History – that swarm of individual destinies – appear as a totalising movement, and how can one avoid the paradox that in order to totalise there must already be a unified principle, that is, that only actual totalities can totalise themselves?"[15] Instead, he argues that the dialectical movement must itself be intelligible to us everywhere and at all times, and it is this dialectical intelligibility (the tool for understanding *praxis,* i.e., any form of individual or collective material project) that can be the only 'way in' to any comprehension of society whatsoever. This is far more a question of method than of definition. Mark Poster puts this point in the following way: "The identity between the individual and history does not imply that the life of the individual recapitulates the life of the species. The bond between the individual and history is epistemological: the dialectical view of history must be able to convince individuals that their life is part of history."[16]

Any attempt to discuss individuals and their relations without being specific about the kinds of relations involved, and their passive and active effects, would be incomplete from Sartre's standpoint: "If individuals ... were simply free *praxis* organising matter ... the bond of interiority would remain univocal and it would be impossible to speak of the very distinctive unity which expresses itself in the social field as passive

begins from the entirely correct idea, according to which, and the expression is his, "Marxism has stopped". To put it back in motion, he raises the question of subjective activity, of its forms, of collective and historical sets." ('Jean-Paul Sartre' (pamphlet) Paris: Potemkin,1980).

15 *CDR* I, p. 79.

16 Mark Poster, *Sartre's Marxism*, (London: Pluto Press, 1979), p. 44.

activity, as active passivity, and as *praxis* and destiny."[17] This unity is totalisation.

Totalisation is history and the process of making history at one and the same time, but it makes possible no concrete predictions, nor does it depend on them to get its internal conceptual motor running. At the same time, intelligibility (i.e. how we can understand the movement of dialectical reason as it is played out in the relations between humanity and itself, and humanity and things) is predicated upon totalisation, but totalisation crucially does not consist of (nor go on to form) a totality.[18] Nor is totalisation separable from that in which it participates – history, human beings, things: "it is easy to establish the intelligibility of dialectical Reason; it is the very movement of totalisation."[19] Whilst Sartre's claim here looks to be somewhat broad and perhaps unduly definitive, it should be understood as more of a negative, limiting approach (as in the Kantian critique of the title), as it looks not to the whole, to pre-existing classifications, nor to nature or a futural situation, but, indeed, to the dialectical relations themselves (and the way in which

17 *CDR* I, p. 185. It is worth noting that Sartre's method has, in order to further flag up the significance of his contribution, exactly the opposite starting point from some contemporary discussions of politics that conceive the crucial relation as that between the individual (or rather, its individuation) and the multitude. Paolo Virno, for example, writes that "[t]he notion of multitude seems to share something with liberal thought because it values individuality but, at the same time, it distances itself from it radically because this individuality is the final product of a process of individuation which stems from the universal, the generic, the pre-individual" (Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude*, New York: Semiotexte, 2004, p. 76). Virno posits a kind of ontological realm (to which communism would presumably return, albeit carrying certain positive elements of capitalism's individuals back with it) out of which atomistic individuals are carved. Virno's model presumes that if we can analyse the processes of individuation, then we can point to a shared origin for otherwise seemingly disjunct and antagonistic positions. He writes: "'Social' should be translated as pre-individual, and 'individual' should be seen as the ultimate result of the process of individuation" (Ibid., p. 80). Sartre's quite different attempt to answer the problem of this relation will revolve around the specific nature of the term 'totalisation'.

18 "A totality is defined as a being which, whilst radically distinct from the sum of its parts, is present in its entirety, in one form or another, in each of its parts or through its relations between some or all of them." *CDR* I, p. 45.

19 Ibid., I, p. 46.

seriality, collectives, groups are internally composed): "the dialectic ... must be at once the activity, the knowledge, and 'the law of the knowledge' of a given milieu of human *praxis*."[20] Again, Sartre's concept of the 'universal singular' touches on this. As he writes regarding Flaubert: "universalised by his epoch, he retotalises his epoch in the course of reproducing himself in his epoch as a singularity. Universal by the singular universality of human history, singular by the universalizing singularity of his projects, he requires being studied simultaneously from both ends."[21]

Admittedly, although this linking of totalisation and intelligibility works against any idea of telos, Sartre's conception does involve a certain initial degree of circularity: "It should be recalled that the crucial discovery of dialectical investigation is that man is 'mediated' by things to the same extent as things are 'mediated' by men."[22] Yet because 'intelligibility' is the primary prism through which all praxis is understood, Sartre does not need to say exactly what is being mediated, or 'what there is' as the material of his research (nor to prioritise society, or the entirety of man, or classes, but simply to be attentive to the way in which these relations are interiorised). As Aronson puts it: "Sartre understands that an adequate Marxism ... has to explain *both* the density and weight of history *and* the transforming activity of human subjects."[23] The specific definition of the subject here is central. As Chiodi remarks: "The key point in Sartre's critical revision of the dialectic is his altered concept of subjectivity. To that disquieting demand in which the Marx of the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* concentrates his critique of Hegel, as to who is 'the bearer of the dialectic', Sartre replies that it is Man (understood as men and women) conceived existentially as *praxis-project*."[24]

20 William L. McBride, *Sartre's Political Theory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), p. 115.

21 Sartre, *L'idiot de la famille* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), pp. 7-8.

22 *CDR*, I, p. 79.

23 Raymond Aronson, 'Vicissitudes of the Dialectic: From Merleau-Ponty's *Les Aventures de la dialectique* to Sartre's Second *Critique*', *Philosophical Forum*, XVIII, no. 4 (Summer 1987), pp. 358-391, p. 256.

24 Pietro Chiodi, *Sartre and Marxism*, trans. Kate Soper (London: Harvester Press, 1978 [orig. 1976]), p. ix.

The notion of subjectivity that forms the core of both Sartre and Badiou's political projects is both a measure of their scepticism vis-à-vis the idea that the social and the (politically) subjective are transitive and their doubt that that the subjective resources for political practice are in any way obvious from the standpoint of the situation. The form of practical humanism that both manifest means that their concept of humanity cannot function as a way of mediating between the social and the political – what then is it? Or rather, what can it do?

What, in particular, of the group-in-fusion? What is the revelation of the 'truth' of man in the diachronic and structural rupture of the group which singles out Sartre's project and avoids the difficulties of an ontological approach to the collective subject? Jameson, for one, will argue that in the *Critique* "the group-in-fusion is hardly a social form at all, but rather an emergence and an event".[25] Mark Poster puts it in the following way: "Since it has no ontological status, the group can persist only through the commitments of its members."[26] There is a sense in which, for Sartre, 'sociality' is always on the side of the order and antagonism that constitutes capitalist atomisation, inertia and seriality: "the inert gathering with its structure of seriality is the basic type of seriality."[27] The 'gathering' for Sartre is the material for the collective, but nevertheless cannot be seen as containing its potential in a latent sense, because the relation of the gathering to itself is diametrically opposed to the structure of the group: "the practico-inert field ... cannot, by any of its conditions, occasion the form of practical sociality [of] the group."[28] Groups are negations and determinations of collectives (including gatherings): "The upheaval which destroys the collective by the flash of a common *praxis* obviously originates in a synthetic, and therefore material, transformation, which occurs in the context of scarcity and of existing structures".[29]

Though this emergence may be contrasted against the backdrop of seriality, it nevertheless demands explanation at the level of its own structure. In other words, we can ask "does the emergence of the group

25 Preface, *CDR* I, p. xxvi.

26 *Sartre's Marxism*, p. 87.

27 *CDR* I, p. 348.

28 Ibid., p. 341.

29 Ibid., p. 349.

contain its own intelligibility?"[30] What is the dialectical rationality of collective action? Badiou argues that, for Sartre, the required mediation is itself partly external: "that which permits the dissolution of the series and creates a new reciprocity is the consciousness of its unbearable character."[31] In this sense disalienation is necessary in order for the group to realise itself. But what in the structure of the group was previously alienated? In a sense, nothing we could point to. The group-in-fusion may well be the 'truth' of man, but it is so only in the sense that it involves an interiorisation of that which was previously encountered as inhuman – the 'man' of the group-in-fusion is not a 'return' to some previous essence, as a simple reading of alienation would have it. This is why we have to speak of an antihumanist humanism whose concern is the subject, rather than an idealist or essentialising humanism. The group-in-fusion, as Sartre describes it, also involves a kind of immanent anti-organicism, in the sense that the project that unites the members of the group cannot be seen from the outside (nor, for that matter, can the group as a whole be comprehended): "I can see my neighbours, or, turning my head, the people behind me, but I can never see them all *at once*, whereas I synthesise the marching of everyone, both behind and ahead of me, through *my own marching*."[32] As Chiodi puts it: "For Sartre, de-alienation ... takes on the form of an *impossible* attempt to suppress the alienating *multiplicity* of human projects in the unity of the projecting subject. This is the task entrusted to the *group* in its role as protagonist of de-alienation. The 'group-in-fusion' or 'as molten', sets itself to 'snatch man from his *statut* of alterity', in such a way that the Other (the former Other) is taken to be *the same*."[33]

Sartre's conception of the group is not simply, however, a reversal of the inhuman through its synthetic internalisation, as its structure also involves a third element, called, in fact, the third party. There was already a notion of the 'third' in seriality, which Sartre explained through the watching of two men at work who could see neither each other nor the observer: "we should not say that *for me* the two labourers are ignorant of one another. They are ignorant of one another *through me* ... by limiting me, each constitutes the limit of the Other, and deprives him, as he

30 Ibid., p. 348.
31 Badiou, 'Jean-Paul Sartre' (pamphlet), p. 6.
32 *CDR* I, p. 373.
33 *Sartre and Marxism*, p. xii.

deprives me, of an objective aspect of the world."[34] The third *party*, on the other hand, is that element of the group which "has nothing to do with alterity"; as Sartre puts it, every member of the group is simultaneously a third party for every other member, as "each of them totalises the reciprocities of the other."[35] This is actually a question of the numericality of the group. In the state of the group-in-fusion, "[the] newcomer joins a group of 100 *through me* insofar as the group which I join will have 100 *through him*. Serially ... we arrive at the group as *two* units ... Through us there are a 100 rather than 98. But for each of us (both me and the other third party) we are, reciprocally, each by the other (and ... by all the Others) the 99th. To put it another way, each of us is the 100th of the Other."[36] We can see how the entire structure of the group is different from the way of counting the individuals in seriality: rather than regarding the other as an obstacle, the shared praxis of the members of the group entails a recognition that the other is as much a part of the group as any other, from the standpoint of the group itself. Rather than a simple addition, the group's structure has qualitatively altered so that it has an internal unity that is recognised as such by each and every member of the group. As Badiou will put it: "'Collective' is not a numerical concept. We say that the event is ontologically collective to the extent that it provides the vehicle for a virtual summoning of all."[37]

4. Badiou's Collective Subject

If Sartre's conception of the group involves a break with social ontology in the name of an emergent subjective force not previously visible from the standpoint of the situation, Badiou's concept of the subject similarly undertakes to break with ontology, although he will couch the subject's emergence in the language of subtraction from the situation, rather than of an upsurge from within it.

Nevertheless, there are clear parallels between Sartre's 'group-in-fusion' and Badiou's later notion of the collective or generic subject,

34 *CDR* I, p. 103.
35 Ibid., p. 374.
36 Ibid., p. 375.
37 Alain Badiou, *Metapolitics*, trans. Jason Barker (London: Verso, 2005 [orig. 1998]), p. 141.

despite the formal differences. Badiou will, like Sartre, maintain that politics is always a break with what is (including, or rather especially, what is described as 'politics' by the state). At the same time, this break (if it is adequately made) is always that of the collective: "An event is political if its material is collective. The use of the term 'collective' is an acknowledgement that if this thought is political, it belongs to all."[38] The later Badiou thus comes closer to Sartre than the Badiou of *Théorie du sujet*, for whom the antagonisms of the bourgeois world were the primary material for the destructive trajectory of the political subject (the proletariat) concentrated in the Party. In the later works, Badiou's conception of the political subject seems to depend upon an underacknowledged reliance on a minimal philosophical anthropology, via the 'floating' axioms, namely the axiom of equality: "equality is not an objective for action, it is an axiom of action" and the generic axiom that 'man thinks' or 'people think', in other words, that: "philosophy addresses all humans as thinking beings since it supposes that all humans think."[39] Badiou's later definition of politics as immediately concerning 'thought' is close to Sartre's notion of dialectical reason, although Badiou's assertion of its existence and importance is explicitly axiomatic, rather than dialectical: "Politics, like all active thought, is axiomatic. The distinction between principles and directives is as essential in politics as the distinction in mathematics between the great axioms of a theory and its theorems."[40] Clearly the axiomatisation of politics allows Badiou to assert that 'there is thought' without any real discussion of what this 'thought' might be, whether it relates to a tradition of thinking thought transcendentally, reflexively or phenomenologically. Furthermore, it is not immediately clear how this mathematised rationalist claim might relate to politics. Why does "the effectiveness of politics relate to the affirmation according to which "for every x, there is thought""?[41] Badiou seems to be ignoring (deliberately or otherwise) an entire history of thinking about the connection between a definition of the human and the subject (as thinking being, active being, collective being) and politics. Badiou appears guilty of confusing a classically rationalist postulate

38 Ibid.

39 'Philosophy and Desire', in Alain Badiou, *Infinite Thought*, ed. and trans. Oliver Feltham and Justin Clemens (London: Continuum, 2003), p. 40.

40 Badiou, 'Beyond Formalisation', an interview with Peter Hallward and Bruno Bosteels, *Angelaki*, vol. 8 no. 2, August 2003, p. 122.

41 *Metapolitics*, p. 141.

(Spinoza's 'men think', for example, or even Heraclitus' 'Thought is common to all') with a Marxist commitment to praxis, without making clear the analysis that links the two. Badiou depends upon, but does not articulate, a kind of philosophical anthropology – and it does not seem possibly to assert axiomatically that humanity does or is such-and-such without invoking the question of how and why one arrives at this definition. Badiou overlooks previous discussions of the genericity of thought and its potential relation to politics whilst nevertheless retaining its terminology.

If Sartre's presentation of the group-in-fusion dramatised a complete break with the social (and certainly with social ontology, as we saw above), Badiou's later notion of the political subject is yet further removed from any kind of relation to pre-existing categories or ways of discussing certain forms of social existence. Sartre's analysis of seriality, gatherings, collectives and groups may find its redemption only in the group-in-fusion, but there is no doubt that there is a serious effort on his part to present an outline of various social phenomena (even if the emergence of the group is always carried out against the social). For Badiou, on the other hand, there is either the discourse of 'bodies and languages' – which he claims characterise 'democratic materialism', the ideological complement of the parliamentary-capitalist world, from the standpoint of which no true rupture can be seen, measured or held to be true – or there is evental politics as a procedure[42]:

> Proletarian politics will be defined as that form of politics which assumes, or even produces, the consequences of [a] modification of intensity. Reactive politics, on the other hand, will be that which acts as if the old transcendental circumstances had themselves produced the consequences in question, as if the existential upsurge of the proletariat was of no consequence whatsoever.[43]

Although this comment comes from a phase (2003) in which Badiou has generally stopped using the word 'proletariat', the concept nevertheless returns as a contrasting pole against which all other forms of politics are deemed 'reactive'. We can see strong parallels with Sartre here, particularly over the question of an 'existential upsurge'. In Sartre's

42 Alain Badiou, *Logiques des mondes* (Paris: Seuil, 2006), p. 10.

43 'Beyond Formalisation', pp. 131-132.

analysis of the group, its internal bonds are perceived as qualitatively different from the alienating divisions of seriality. For Badiou, more complicatedly, it comes in the form of a figure of 'polyvalent' humanity, "the affirmative multiplicity of capacities".[44] This question of capacities arises elsewhere in Badiou, in a discussion of 'subjective capacity': "subjective capacity really is infinite, once the subject is constituted under the mark of the event. Why, according to Badiou? Because subjective capacity amounts to drawing the consequences of a change, of a new situation, and if this change is evental [*événementiel*] then its consequences are infinite."[45] Subjectivity here is measured, not so much by the nature of its break, as with Sartre's group, but by the process of its 'drawing consequences', by how the political collective decides to persevere, on the back of an initial newness. Specifically in the case of politics, it involves the drawing up of new names: "Politics is, for itself, its own proper end; in the mode of what is being produced as true statements ... by the capacity of a collective will."[46]

Badiou's vision of the collective political subject is certainly more tenacious than Sartre's disheartening vision of treason, betrayal and bureaucratic ossification, imagining the possibility of longevity as a real capacity of the politically subjectivised subject (although Badiou will leave open the possibility of betrayal). However, this question of 'capacity' actually lacks much real explication in Badiou's work, though he certainly needs to depend upon it in order to 'protect' the kind of politics he counts as one of his four conditions for philosophy ("philosophy is the locus of thinking wherein the "there are" truths is stated, along with their compossibility"[47]). We should note, however, that Badiou holds to a notion of capacity that is not equivalent to potentiality. This is because it is only *after* the event that the 'capacity' of the subject gets retroactively created, as it were – again this is why we cannot speak of an 'ontology' of subjects in Badiou, nor even of a process of individuation or transformation: the subject is actually 'nothing' before its being called upon to bear the event: "Politics is impossible without the

44 *Metapolitics*, p. 75.

45 'Beyond Formalisation', p. 132.

46 Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham (London: Continuum, 2005 [orig. 1988]), p. 354.

47 Alain Badiou, 'Definition of Philosophy', *Manifesto for Philosophy*, trans. Norman Madarasz (Albany: SUNY, 1999), p. 141.

statement that people, taken indistinctly, are capable of the thought that constitutes the post-evental political subject."[48] The subject is post-evental, yet its capacity for thought somehow must prefigure post-evental behaviour and commitment.

What I am defending, by bringing attention to Badiou's neglect, is the idea of a minimal philosophical anthropology whose underlying object is the collective political subject, which is predicated not on an idea of pre-existing harmony between man and world, but on the disjunction between

48 *Metapolitics*, p. 142. It is revealing in this regard to compare the fact of a similar, though ultimately very different attempt to capture the role and function of philosophy and its relation to other disciplines, that of Deleuze and Guattari in their last book, *What is Philosophy?* This text is important here precisely for what it does not talk about, that is to say, the absent term (not art which deals with affect, not science which deals with functions, not philosophy which deals with concepts), but politics. The book may have political *implications*, but it does not put forward a space in which the specific innovations of politics can be maintained. Deleuze's critique of the subject is predicated on an assumption that the subject is only to be understood (negatively) as a legalistic, juridical figure (transcendentally and empirically), which is why his discussions of it are generally so dismissive. One of the few points at which Deleuze engages in a more complex discussion of the subject comes in his reading of structuralism in the 1972 essay 'How do we Recognise Structuralism?' Here he argues that structuralism "is not at all a form of thought that suppresses the subject, but one that breaks it up and distributes it systematically, that contests the identity of the subject, made of individuations, that dissipates it and makes it shift from place to place, an always nomad subject, made of individuations, but impersonal ones, or of singularities, but pre-individual ones" (Deleuze, *Desert Islands* p. 190). However, the question of politics here, either for structuralism, or for Deleuze's specific relation to it (a complex question) is ultimately postponed: "These ... criteria, from the subject to praxis, are the most obscure – the criteria of the future" (Ibid., p. 192 - the English translation inexplicably replaces 'praxis' with practice). This futural positioning partly explains why there is no explicit concept of politics or its matching modus operandi (praxis) in his later work. Clearly there is no question of Deleuze (or, rather, Deleuze and Guattari) predicating any of their discussions on a concept of man or humanity, but they are left with an awkward solution: no transcendental 'subject', no phenomenological description of being-in-the-world, but only 'the brain-subject' and 'sensation': "the brain-subject is here called *soul* or *force*, since only the soul preserves by contracting that which matter dissipates"*(What is Philosophy?*, p. 211). And "Not every organism has a brain, and not all life is organic, but everywhere there are forces that constitute microbrains, or an

the political subject and the 'unnatural' status of this subject vis-à-vis state-bound politics. My claim here is that there are resources *internal* to philosophical anthropology that incorporate the discussion about politics that allow for rupture and revolution, and that we can see these resources in the work of Feuerbach, early Marx, Sartre and Badiou. But what of this denial of harmony?

To some degree I concur with Peter Hallward's claim that "Badiou refuses any cosmological-anthropological reconciliation, any comforting delusion that there is some deep connection between our ideas and images and the material world we inhabit." However, I dispute the fact that this means that "there is no distinct place in Badiou's work for a philosophical anthropology of any sort."[49] The whole point of the discussion of political humanism and the collective political subject put forward here is to break with this model of harmony, and yet not to imagine that this *also* entails complete eradication of any attempt to discuss 'humanity' in a political context. It seems, as I have argued, that Badiou actually needs to presuppose a very minimal anthropology in order for his system to include the very category of politics at all, even if he doesn't acknowledge his debts to the German tradition of thinking philosophically about genericity and humanity. In terms of his philosophical peers, Deleuze and Guattari, for example, need not do this because they have no special concern for the category of the human; on the contrary, this is one of the many things they seek to displace. Badiou, however, clearly does retain the term, albeit via a rather specific definition. His references to Marx, amongst others (including Samuel Beckett), reflect this:

> [*The Communist Manifesto*] is the great text of that fundamental historical optimism which foresees, under the name of 'communism,' the triumph of generic humanity. It's well known that for Marx 'proletariat' is the name for the historical agent of this triumph. And I remind you that in my own speculations, 'generic' is the property of the True.[50]

inorganic life of things" (Ibid., p. 213). We are back to Sartre's critique, not only of the problem of 'making sense' of nature, but also of the difficulty of beginning a discussion of politics from ontology.

49 Peter Hallward, *Badiou: A Subject to Truth*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), p. 53.

50 'Beyond Formalisation', p. 123.

It is Badiou's retention and reconstruction of the term 'generic' (and sometimes 'generic humanity') that needs explanation. It should by now be clear exactly how and why Badiou thinks he remain faithful to his 'anti-humanist' mentors and peers, Althusser and Foucault, and yet at the same time remain resolutely Sartrean (most particularly in his discussion of politics): "Today, I still maintain my conclusion of that time: one can keep the truth of subjective choice without reinstating the categories of humanism."[51] This is because the opposition itself (humanism/antihumanism) is not the real one at stake, either for Badiou, or for his predecessors. It is rather the question of the subject. Badiou can perfectly well agree with Foucault and Althusser that the question of Man is ideological and must be overturned, just so long as there is the possibility (not the proven existence) of a subject. The question, then, is just how stripped down this definition of the subject can or will be. Hallward puts it strongly when he says that: "His subject is firmly antinormative and antimoralist. Badiou's subject is perfectly consistent with the "death of Man" declared by Althusser and Foucault."[52] But recall the claim, taken from Althusser's autobiography, that theoretical anti-humanism is the precondition for practical humanism. 'Practical humanism' here can mean nothing other than political practice, whose agent must be a certain kind of collective. The subject of politics for Badiou is clearly not the 'man' of the bourgeois world, the moral world or the social world, but it does, indeed must, concern the question of the *capacities* of man, to think and to act in an egalitarian way, in a collective manner, against the order of the situation. As Badiou puts it with reference to Sartre, "it is not that man, as Nietzsche thought, is that which must be overcome. What must be overcome – this is a decisive intuition of Sartre – is being as it is qua being."[53]

To put this question of humanism another way, we could ask, what would it be to think a non-human politics? A politics that *didn't* make any minimal claim about the nature (or non-nature) of its subject? Clearly there is a case for making a critique of the idea of essence (dismissed as 'ideological' in the case of Althusser), and yet we surely need to be able to say something about the collective political nature, however rare, of

51 Badiou, interview with Emmanuel Barot, 'Jean-Paul Sartre and Marxism: Theoretical and Political Companions' (2006, unpublished).

52 *A Subject to Truth*, p. xxvii.

53 Badiou, 'Saisissement, Dessaisie, Fidélité', *Les Temps Modernes* (1990), p. 201.

mankind. Of course, we could always say that Man is in a process of constant change, that he is invented in part by his conditions and in part by himself (as Marx and Sartre both claim), but if politics is 'about' anything, if it has a meaning outside of parliamentary representation and the ballot box, it must make a decision about the value and meaning of men and women from the outset.

On this point Badiou engages in an essential and conscious, if under-examined, equivocation between the mathematical uses of the terms generic and infinity, and the political implications of these terms, such that we can draw the parallels with Feuerbach's conception of humanity (despite Badiou's neglect). Consider Badiou's claim that "politics is the sole truth procedure that is not only generic in its result, but also in the local composition of its subject".[54] Reflect, moreover, on the following statement, that: "the infinite comes into play in every truth procedure, but only in politics does it take the first place. This is because only in politics is the deliberation about the possible (and hence about the infinity of the situation) constitutive of the process itself ... politics treats the infinite as such according to the principle of the same, the egalitarian principle. We will say that the numericality of the political procedure has the infinite as its first term; whereas for love this first term is the one; for science the void; and for art a finite number."[55] Both claims indicate that the terms generic and infinity have a special role to play in Badiou's construction of the political subject, just as they did for Feuerbach's claim that when men and women think, he or she thinks, precisely, the infinite, and moreover that he thinks as a member of a genera (man), and that this 'revelation' is the recognition of certain capacities that get 'alienated' both in religion and philosophy. Feuerbach's may have been an idealist argument, albeit one containing a strong defence of the 'sensuous', in which the early Marx could see some political potential, but Badiou, via Sartre, implicitly returns to Feuerbach's terms (without the intervening Marxist critique) precisely because he thinks that politics has a direct relation, not primarily to action or praxis, but to thought: "Only politics is intrinsically required to declare that the thought that it is is the thought of all."[56] But what of Badiou's definition of the generic?

54 *Metapolitics*, p. 142.

55 Alain Badiou, *Theoretical Writings*, ed. Ray Brassier and Alberto Toscano (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 64.

56 *Metapolitics*, p. 142.

Badiou's concept of genericity is introduced (after the work of mathematician Paul Cohen) to determine 'what-is-not-being-qua-being' (the event) as supplement to the situation: "A truth [is] a generic part of the situation, 'generic' designating that it is any part whatsoever of it, that it says nothing in particular about the situation, except precisely its multiple-being as such, its fundamental inconsistency."[57] The 'subject' of truth, in each case, is describes as a 'finite moment' of each generic procedure, generic because, as in the case of politics, "it can only be egalitarian and anti-Statist, tracing, in the historic and social thick, humanity's genericity, the deconstruction of strata, the ruin of differential or hierarchical representations and the assumption of a communism of singularities."[58] This 'assumption' of the communism of singularities is a fusion of the two 'floating' axioms I mentioned before, according to which 'equality is not an objective for action, it is an axiom of action' and 'man thinks' or 'people think'. The claim that 'people think' is a claim about the 'material' of politics, referring as much to what people to what they do. Badiou's definition, does not, however, strive to be an ontological one (not least because mathematics exhausts the question of being), nor does it seek to explain the relations between human practice and political action, under any mode of production or at any period in history. Like Sartre's universalising example of the group-in-fusion storming the Bastille, there is an atemporal, ahistorical structure to Badiou's political subject (its generic nature, its egalitarian address, in essence, its 'sameness').

Interestingly, although not surprisingly, once we accept Sartre's influence on Badiou over the question of the novelty and collective structure of the subject, it is clear that Sartre's criticisms of ontology and monism noted above are close to some of Badiou's more recent criticisms of Deleuze, in which Badiou argues that because Deleuze "purely and simply identifies philosophy with ontology"[59] in a Spinozist way he cannot properly think the novelty (the event, the encounter) that he otherwise seeks to defend. Or, as he puts it in an earlier work, again with reference to Deleuze, "the ontology of the multiple is a veiled

57 Ibid., p. 107.

58 Ibid., p. 108.

59 Alain Badiou, *Deleuze: The Clamour of Being*, trans. Louise Burchill (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. 20.

metaphysics".[60] Why is this the case? If ontology is 'full', if entities emerge from it as if shaped from a pre-existing lump of matter, there is a problem both in terms of a prior over-determination by the 'substance' or being, and in terms of how to account for radically unexpected breaks within the current order. Badiou writes: "The "ontological" characterisation of the political on the basis of plurality, or being-together, is ... much too broad."[61] Although Badiou is clearly himself concerned with presenting an elaborate set-theoretical ontology in his later work (*Being and Event*), it is also the case that this is an attempt to put to one side virtually all philosophical descriptions of ontology, such as Deleuze pursues throughout most of his work. Badiou puts this point in the following way:

> Our goal is to establish the meta-ontological thesis that mathematics is the historicity of the discourse of being qua being. And the goal of this goal is to assign philosophy to the thinkable articulation of two discourses (and practices) which *are not it*: mathematics, science of being, and the intervening doctrines of the event, which precisely, designate "that-which-is-not-being-qua-being".[62]

The question of the inherently political nature of Badiou's desire to maintain a concept of the subject, even after his turn to the 'neutral' ontological discourse of set theory and (historically) after the extreme post-Nietzschean and deconstructive broadsides aimed at the very notion of 'the subject', concerns what we might describe as his *oscillatory* relationship to Marxism. In *Théorie du Sujet*, he claims that Marxism "is the discourse that supports the proletariat as subject. This is a principle we must never abandon," but by the time of *Metapolitics* (1998) he denies the very existence of such a conceptual 'thing' as Marxism. It is, he writes, "the (void) name of an absolutely inconsistent set, once it is referred back, as it must be, to the history of political singularities" (by which he means Lenin, Mao, their ruptures with Stalin, but also Althusser).[63] The question here is: exactly what kind of Marxist is Badiou, or is he something else entirely? Again, in the earlier work, he

60 Badiou, Alain, *Théorie du sujet* (Paris: Seuil, 1982), p. 40.
61 *Metapolitics*, p. 21.
62 *Being and Event*, p. 13.
63 *Metapolitics*, p. 58.

reads his own attempt to delineate a theory of the subject as consistent with Marxism: "We ask materialism to include that which is needed today and of which Marxism has always made its guiding thread, even without knowing it: a theory of the subject,"[64] yet later, in an interview, he will describe this concern as specifically Maoist, rather than Marxist in a more classical sense: "in Maoism, a very special place seemed to have been reserved for the question of subjectivity in politics – for a proper political subjectivity."[65]

In *Théorie du sujet*, Badiou is critical of a purely Althusserian Marxism that would absent the subject from history, only acknowledging the negatively produced individual ideological 'subjects' (plural). In this vein, Badiou writes, "Science of history? *Marxism is the discourse through which the proletariat sustains itself as subject.*"[66] It is critical, thus, that for Badiou this subject be singular, collective, and not equitable to the myriad 'bad subjects' of Althusser's conception of ideology. In his late essay on Althusser, entitled 'Subjectivity without a Subject', Badiou states baldly that "there is no theory of the subject in Althusser, nor could there ever be one."[67] The subject, for Althusser, is not a concept, it is merely an ideological effect: "there is no subject, since there are only processes".[68] If this is all there is, Badiou asks, "how are we to distinguish politics from the science of processes without a subject, that is to say, from the science of history, in the form of historical materialism?"[69] Badiou attempts to 'de-suture' politics from science, making each of them truth conditions in their own right. Politics is thus for him a category which is neither reducible to science nor ideology. Nor, as it was for Sartre, is it historical, or (rather) historicisable: "There are only plural instances of politics, irreducible to one another, and which do not comprise any homogeneous history."[70]

64 *Théorie du sujet*, p. 198.
65 Gabriel Riera, *Alain Badiou: Philosophy and Its Conditions* (New York: SUNY, 2005), p. 243.
66 *Théorie du sujet*, p. 62.
67 *Metapolitics*, p. 59.
68 Ibid, p. 40.
69 Ibid, p. 60.
70 Ibid., p. 23.

5. Badiou, Sartre and the Collective Political Subject

There are two ways of best presenting the shared qualities of Sartre and Badiou's notions of the collective political subject, as well as flagging the key difference between them. The first of these involves Badiou's respectful yet highly critical pamphlet on Sartre published in the wake of the latter's death in 1980. In this piece, Badiou makes clear exactly what he sees are the problems with Sartre's analysis in the *Critique*. However, since Badiou's own position on the question of the subject has changed since that time, in such as way as to draw him closer to Sartre's analysis, it is also a useful document to reflect upon in order to demonstrate the shifts in Badiou's position, as well as some of the problems in Sartre's.[71]

As highlighted above, one of the major differences between them involves the question of praxis. This is a term that Sartre retains, but Badiou, in his desire to break with any discussion of the social, replaces it with what we could see as a process of subjectivation – the internal relation of the subject to the truth to which it is faithful. As Bosteels puts it: "Between the structured situation of a given multiple and the various figures of subjectivity that actually make a truth happen, the real issue is to account for how and when one can impact the other, for how long, and

71 As a side-note, unable to be explicated in any more detail here, Sartre and Badiou share a concept of treachery ('treason' for Sartre and 'betrayal' for Badiou) which haunts the collective political subject: "Treason ... is always a concrete possibility for everyone" (Sartre, *CDR* I, p. 444); "fidelity ... is never inevitable or necessary" (Badiou, *Ethics An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, trans. Peter Hallward London: Verso, 2001), p. 69. This is important as it demonstrates how fragile the collective subject is – how insubstantial, we could say. There is a further technical point about shared trajectories which is not quite the main claim at stake here, but is nevertheless worthy of comment. It concerns set theory. Kouvelakis makes the point that "As Alain Badiou's recent and impressive meta-ontological attempt leads us to think, in subtitling his *Critique*, "Theory of Practical Sets", Sartre had set theory in mind when he was outlining the structures of this primary set which is the series." Kouvelakis further notes that Sartre, already in *Cahiers pour une morale*, claimed that "humanity is a transfinite concept" ('Sérialité, actualité, événement: notes sur la *Critique de la raison dialectique*', in *Sartre, Lukacs, Althusser: des Marxistes en philosophie* (Paris: PUF, 2005), p. 54). Certainly, Sartre's claims with regard to seriality resemble those of Badiou's that concern the everyday structure of things. Furthermore, both their claims about the rupture of political subjectivation depend upon a 'subtraction' from the situation.

to what effect, or with what type of consequences."[72] We can see that Badiou takes much from the structure of the group-in-fusion but without any of the detail of Sartre's presentation of other social phenomena. The temporality of Badiou's subject, as noted above, such that it only exists in time with the event and cannot be located prior to it (Sartre at least sees the stirrings of the group-in-fusion in the gathering, even if the group itself marks a qualitatively different break with the social order), is not of the order of praxis, but of the subject's own intrinsic process and organisation. In the piece on Sartre in which Badiou still holds to a position close to that of *Théorie du sujet*, he argues that: "Sartre's originality lies in his proposal of a formal framework in which the two terms of the contradiction, masses and organisation, revolt and revolution, history and politics, are deployed on the basis of a single human principle: free individual praxis, itself confronted with an inhuman exterior, the inorganic world, the material world."[73] But at this point, this 'free individual praxis' obscures for Badiou the terms organisation, revolution and politics, by means of their blurring with masses, revolt and history. Badiou's main problem with this definition of praxis is the location and status of the term organisation. For Sartre, when he speaks of the organisation or the institution that takes place after the initial coming together of the group, these inertial sedimentations are unfortunate consequences, not more articulate versions of, an initial moment of solidarity. For Badiou at this point, however, Sartre is not nearly 'Marxist' enough in his analysis: "Sartre sees clearly that organisation is an absolute term of politics and that, from this point of view, History and politics cannot be identified with one another. But he looks for the dialectical reason of organisation entirely on the side of the masses."[74] Sartre does indeed see no difference between organisation from above or from below: "quite apart from any political considerations ... the mode of regroupment and organisation is not fundamentally different according to whether it depends on centralisation from above or on a spontaneous liquidation of seriality from within the series itself and on the common organisation which follows."[75] This is quite clearly anathema to this earlier, Maoist, Badiou, for whom failing to distinguish between the form

72 Bruno Bosteels, 'On the Subject of the Dialectic', *Think Again: Alain Badiou and the Future of Philosophy*, ed. Peter Hallward (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 152.

73 'Jean-Paul Sartre' (pamphlet), p. 12.

74 Ibid.

75 *CDR* I, p. 520.

of organisation particular to the party and the form of organisation specific to the masses is a fundamental error:

> For [Sartre], an organisation is ultimately a crystallised revolt. Crystallised because it has been obliged to interiorise the passivity against which the group rose up. For Sartre, the political party remains an instrument: it is the necessity at the heart of freedom. It is the instrumental passivity within activity. For us, the logic of the political Subject, the logic of class, is not continuous with the mass movement. The Party is a particular process, internal to the masses, but which effectuates a particular rupture, the rupture of politics, the rupture of communism. That is why the Party is something more and something else than an instrument.[76]

The later Badiou will turn his back on this notion of the Party, and on this logic of the relationship of the party to the masses, speaking precisely of a form of politics 'without' a party, according to which "to produce the same, to count each one universally as one, it is necessary to work *locally*, in the gap opened up between politics and the State."[77] It is in this procedure of putting the state at a distance, rather than reflecting its forms (the party), that Badiou seeks to place his current theory of political subjectivation. In this sense, he returns to Sartre's concern with the 'situation', although without returning to the language and dialectical nuances of the latter's notion of praxis. Badiou's later concern with the process of subjectivation, the fidelity or otherwise of the subject to the truth that invents it, is not a question of praxis, but is precisely this concern with process, with the formalisation and order of how to proceed as a collective subject within the situation – hence the term truth *procedure*. Sartre, on the other hand, defended a notion of praxis *against* process:

> What difference is there … between process and *praxis*? Both are dialectical; they are defined by their movement and direction; they transcend the obstacles of the common field and transform them into stepping-stones. Both are defined in terms of a particular determination of the field of possibilities, by

76 'Jean-Paul Sartre' (pamphlet), p. 13.
77 *Metapolitics*, p. 150.

> which the meaning of their different moments can be explained. But *praxis* is directly revealed *by its end* … that is to say by a project; at each moment of the action, the agent *produces himself* in a particular posture, accompanied by a specific effort in accordance with present givens in the light of the future objective.[78]

Sartre preserves the relationship between the individual and the group in the concept of the praxis-project. In this way the collective political subject demonstrates its unity through its practice, rather than through mere declaration or external pressure. Badiou instead removes the telos of the project from the aleatory trajectory of a truth procedure.

6. Conclusion

Sartre and the later Badiou's conceptions of the collective political subject are both predicated on the idea that politics must involve a radical break with what is – both being-in-the-world, and existing 'political' systems, and must involve the construction of specific political figures (the group-in-fusion, the faithful collective). They neither depend on ontology nor on existing political formations in order to draw out the construction of this figure. But they do recast the question of man in a way that prevents the term's overcoding by any normalising description, whether it be phenomenological, scientific or moral, precisely by refiguring the very question 'what is man?' in terms of a subject that is not the *whole* of humanity, conceived as a natural, unified entity, but a rare figure that is qualitatively different from the order with which it broke. Badiou, I have argued, partly neglects his own philosophical inheritance when he simply replaces any discussion of the subject and capacity with axiomatic declarations, but the fact that both Sartre and Badiou's work goes so profoundly against the grain of some of philosophy's more unreflexive reactionary treatments of the concept of the 'subject' means that we cannot simply go back to an unthinking use of this term. The collective political subject, in theory and in practice, is the antidote to philosophy's inward gaze.

78 *CDR* I, p. 549.

Pli 20 (2009), 28-54

Capitalism and the Non-Philosophical Subject[1]

NICK SRNICEK

"The real problem is not how to intervene in the world of philosophy, such as it supposedly subsists in-itself, or how to transform it from within. The problem is how to use philosophy so as to effect a real transformation of the subject in such a way as to allow it to break the spell of its bewitchment by the world and enable it to constitute itself through a struggle with the latter."[2]

François Laruelle

After being stuck within the self-imposed limits of discourse, subjectivity, and culture for far too long, continental philosophy is at last making a push away from the constraints of correlationism,[3] the presupposition that being and thought must necessarily be reciprocally related. This work is most apparent in a handful of exciting contemporary philosophers – Ray Brassier, Iain Hamilton Grant, Graham Harman and Quentin Meillassoux (although the list could easily be expanded to include other notables such as Alain Badiou, Gilles Deleuze, Bruno Latour and Slavoj Žižek). The main theme running through all of these diverse thinkers is a fierce desire to break through the finitude of anthropomorphism and separate once and for all the reciprocal constitution of being and thought. However, while the undeniably useful, interesting, and important philosophical work that

1 My sincere thanks goes out to Kieran Aarons, Taylor Adkins, Ray Brassier, and Benjamin Woodard for providing invaluable assistance and criticism during the formulation of this paper.

2 François Laruelle, 'What Can Non-Philosophy Do?' *Angelaki* 8:2 (2003), p. 179, hereafter *WC*.

3 For a concise and excellent outlining of 'correlationism', see: Q. Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, trans. by Ray Brassier (New York: Continuum, 2008).

has been done by these thinkers is significant in itself, there is nonetheless a notable absence so far when it comes to issues of subjectivity and politics (we are here limiting ourselves to the four dominant practitioners). To a large degree, this absence can be attributed to the mundane necessity of having to lay out a philosophical theory step-by-patient-step. The risk in the meantime, however, is that the multi-faceted work of these thinkers appears to outsiders as simply an interesting, but ultimately useless theoretical venture. This is especially pertinent considering the radically nihilistic project of Brassier – one which could easily be taken to eliminate the very possibility of politics.[4] So the question becomes, what sort of insights can speculative realism offer that have not already been given by deconstruction, psychoanalysis, feminism, or Marxism? It is the aim of this paper to begin to answer these types of questions. Without pretending to speak for these theorists themselves, this paper will attempt to develop some lines of thought upon subjectivity and politics, developed on the basis of current speculative realist writings. In particular, we will take our cue from Ray Brassier's re-construction of François Laruelle's work, and focus on non-philosophy's political potential. The rationale for this choice is our contention that it is Laruelle who has currently provided the most intriguing conceptual tools to begin thinking "in accordance with" the Real.[5] On that basis, therefore, we will first examine non-philosophy and its particular type of subject.[6] We will then see how the self-sufficiency of Deleuze and Guattari's capitalist socius can be opened up through a non-Decisional approach, and finally we will develop some preliminary thoughts on what non-

4 Brassier has elsewhere suggested that his defence of nihilism is in part a response to the theologization of politics that has become popular in continental circles (Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida being two exemplars of this trend).

5 It should be made explicit here that we will not be entering into a discussion of alternative readings of Laruelle. For our purposes, it is Brassier who has made clear the realist orientation of Laruelle and so this essay will focus solely on Brassier's reading of Laruelle. The main difference between Laruelle's and Brassier's work can arguably be seen in their respective identifications of radical immanence – whereas Laruelle will end up privileging Man, Brassier will instead argue for a being-nothing. See: R. Brassier, *Nihil Unbound*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 127–38, hereafter *NU*.

6 Laruelle has described this subject as 'the Stranger', while Brassier has preferred to describe it as an 'Alien-subject', evoking the radical alterity which science fiction has attempted to attain.

philosophy can provide for a political project.

Prior to beginning this project, it will undoubtedly be of use to first examine the rudiments of non-philosophy as articulated by Brassier and Laruelle. The near-complete absence of Laruelle's work in English makes it a widely overlooked – although increasingly less so – position in the English-speaking world. To add to this linguistic divide is the sheer difficulty of Laruelle's writing and the intricacy of his project. In this regard, Ray Brassier and John Mullarkey[7] have provided an admirable service in their exporting of this French thinker to the English-speaking world. In addition, Brassier has also made his reconstruction of Laruelle available online.[8] With that easily attainable and comprehensive resource available, we feel justified in limiting our discussion of Laruelle here to only the most pertinent points.

1. NON-PHILOSOPHY

Non-philosophy, in its most basic sense, is an attempt to limit philosophy's pretensions in the name of the Real of radical immanence. It is an attempt to shear immanence of any constitutive relation with the transcendences of thought, language, or any other form of ideality, thereby revealing the Real's absolute determining power – independently-of and indifferently-to any reciprocal relation with ideality. It is true that numerous philosophies have proclaimed their intentions to achieve immanence, with a number of them going to great lengths to eschew all ideality and reach a properly immanent and realist beginning. What Laruelle reveals, however, is that all these previous attempts have been hindered – not by their content, which is overtly materialist, but rather by their very *form* of philosophizing. It is this form which Laruelle gives the name of Decision.[9] Even materialist philosophies are turned into

7 J. Mullarkey, *Post-Continental Philosophy: An Outline* (New York: Continuum, 2007), hereafter *PP*.

8 R. Brassier, 'Alien Theory: The Decline of Materialism in the Name of Matter' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Warwick, 2001), hereafter *AT*. A copy of this dissertation can be found here: <http://www. cinestatic.com/trans-mat/>.

9 As should become apparent, Decision constitutes the essence of philosophy for Laruelle, so that when he speaks of 'non-philosophy' this should be taken as a synonym for non-Decisional philosophy. In this regard, Laruelle's own work is a non-Decisional *form* of philosophy, rather than the simple renunciation of philosophy. We will follow Laruelle's use of 'philosophy', however its specificity should be kept in mind when we move to the more explicit political sections of this paper. There we will see that capitalism itself operates as a philosophy.

idealisms by Decision making them reliant on a synthesis constituted by and through thought.

Decision is the constitutive self-positing and self-giving gesture of philosophy, and one which invariably (and problematically) makes philosophy circular and reciprocally constitutive of the Real. In its simplest form, Decision consists of three elements: (1) a presupposed empirical datum, (2) a posited *a priori* faktum, and (3) their posited as given synthetic unity.[10] What is important to note, to avoid confusion, is that the datum and the faktum here are structural positions capable of being filled in with a wide variety of content (such as phenomena/phenomenality, known/knower, ekstasis/enstasis, conditioned/condition, actual/virtual, presence/archi-text, etc.). As such, Laruelle can plausibly argue that philosophy has invariably made use of this structure, despite the obvious historical diversity of philosophies.[11] In any particular philosophy, these terms are established through the method of transcendental deduction that comprises philosophical Decision.[12] Faced with an always-already given indivisible immanence, philosophy proceeds by first drawing a distinction between an empirical faktum and its *a priori* categorial conditions. From this presupposed empirical data, its specific *a priori* categorial conditions are derived. Secondly, these derived categories are unified into a single transcendental Unity acting as their universally necessary condition – the original synthetic unity that makes all other syntheses possible. On this basis, we can now move in the opposite direction to the third step, whereby the transcendental Unity is

10 There is a more complicated version of Decision that Brassier outlines, but for our purposes this version will suffice. The interested reader, however, can find more here: *AT*, p. 155.

11 While the universalist claims of this philosophical structure are debatable, much like Meillassoux's correlationist structure, it does appear to be common to nearly all post-Kantian philosophies. For Laruelle's own attempt to show this structure at work in various philosophies, c.f. F. Laruelle, *Les Philosophies de la Différence (Introduction Critique)* (Paris: Presse Universitaires de France, 1986).

12 We borrow this step-by-step methodology from Brassier, who himself models it after Laruelle's discussion in the essay 'The Transcendental Method' (c.f. *NU*, pp. 123–4).

used to derive the way in which the categories provide the conditions for the empirical, i.e. the way in which they are all synthesized (and systematized) together. With this three-step process in mind, we can see why Laruelle claims that Decision finds its essential moment in the Unity of the transcendental deduction. This Unity (which is a unity by virtue of synthesizing the datum and faktum into a hybrid of both, not because it need be objectified or subjectified – hence even Derrida's *différánce* and Deleuze's intensive difference[13] can be included as examples) acts both as the *immanent presupposition* of the transcendental method and the *transcendent result/generator* of the presupposed empirical and posited *a priori*. In other words, this dyad of faktum and datum is presupposed as immanently given in experience *and* derived as the transcendental conditions for this experience. Unsurprisingly then, philosophy's inaugural distinction between a datum and a faktum finds only the synthesis of this distinction as the end result of the transcendental method, a synthesis which then circles back to validate philosophy's initial distinction. Thus, the gesture of Decision effectively determines not only the synthetic unity/hybrid, but also the nature of the empirical and the *a priori* as the moments of this synthetic unity. As a result, Decision makes philosophy ubiquitous – everything becomes material for philosophy to think, and philosophy becomes co-extensive with (and co-determining of) reality.

Against this imperial form of philosophy, non-philosophy will resolutely refrain from attempting to *think* immanence or establish any relation between philosophy and the Real (even as its absolute Other). What is called for, through a suspension of Decision, is a non-reflexive non-philosophy; one which would not be inaugurated by a reflexive decision determining the nature of the the real in advance. Non-philosophy will not be a thought *of* the Real, but rather a thought *according to* the Real. With this in mind, it "suffices to postulate – not a thought adequate to it – a type of experience of the Real which escapes from self-position, which is not a circle of thought and the Real, a One which does not unify but remains in-One, a Real which is *immanent (to) itself rather than to a form of thought*, to a 'logic', etc."[14] It is this Real as

13 To be clear, while it is true that Deleuze's intensive difference in fact indexes a *splitting*, it does so only by simultaneously joining together what it splits. This is precisely the synthetic mixture that Brassier will denounce as inevitably idealist.

the radically immanent One,[15] which provides the means for non-philosophy to break free of and explain philosophy's vicious circle. It is this radical immanence which we mentioned before was always already given prior to philosophy's Decision.[16] This indivisible One is radically indifferent to thought and to the determinations involved within the philosophical Decision. Thus, speaking of it involves axioms – entirely immanent descriptions posited by the Real itself – rather than referential statements.[17] On the basis of its indivisibility, we must also uphold that prior to any philosophical positing of a 'Decisional transcendence/non-Decisional immanence' dualism, this separation is always already given. Moreover, as outside of philosophical positing, the One can be given without the philosophical requirement of a transcendental mode of givenness. In other words, the Real *qua* One can be described as the (admittedly unwieldy) always-already-given-without-givenness. All of this does not, however, entail that it is radically isolated from language, thought, etc. – which would return it to an external transcendence – instead it is simply not involved in a reciprocal relation with these transcendences of philosophical Decisions. It is indifferent to philosophical determinations (such as predication or definition, whether through the mediums of thought or language), not external to them.

But the skeptical critic will immediately ask – does not the distinction between the One and the Decisional dyad re-introduce precisely the dualism of Decision? To counter this claim, Laruelle will answer that

14 F. Laruelle, *Principes de la Non-Philosophie*, (Paris: Presse Universitaires de France, 1996), p. 6. Translation graciously provided by Taylor Adkins.

15 We will see in the section on unilateral duality that one reason for describing the Real as 'One' is because it is devoid of all differentiating relations. Relations fall solely within the ambit of philosophy. To be clear, however, the One does not entail a unity in any sense, and the Real itself is ontologically inconsistent.

16 In some sense, Laruelle's project can be seen as a radical continuation of Husserl's project to begin with ultimate immanence. But whereas Husserl and every phenomenologist afterwards have characterized immanence in relation to some other basic term, Laruelle is suspending the self-sufficiency of *all* these determinations.

17 As Brassier helpfully notes, it is not that the Real is ineffable (which would be again to separate it from philosophy), but rather that it is "inexhaustively effable as what determines its own effability" (Personal communication, 1/26/09). Or in other words, it is not a matter of concepts determining the Real, but of the Real determining the concepts appropriate to it.

instead of the difference being presupposed and posited by a philosophical Decision, it is instead posited as already given. From philosophy's perspective, the difference must be constituted by philosophy's gestures of separation; but from the non-philosophical perspective, what is given(-without-givenness) is its already achieved separation. Furthermore, what this separation separates is the realm of separability itself (i.e. philosophy and its systems of relations) from the Inseparable as that which is indifferent to philosophical distinctions.[18] This Inseparable does not oppose philosophy, nor does it negate it – rather it simply suspends its self-sufficient autonomy in order to open it up to determination by the radically immanent Real. We will later on have a chance to more fully examine these claims in light of the concept of 'unilateral duality'.

With all this in mind, we must now broach the more pertinent question: what does non-philosophy do? We have outlined some of the basis axioms of non-philosophy and set out its understanding of philosophy, but when we put it into action what does this theory achieve? First and foremost, we must realize that non-philosophy is not a discourse about radical immanence, but rather a means to *explain* philosophy.[19] Radical immanence is simply the invariant X that is posited as always-already-given-without-givenness. The Real is non-problematic – by virtue of being always-already-given, the interesting question becomes how to proceed from the immanent Real to the transcendence of philosophy. As Brassier puts it, "it is the consequences of thinking philosophy immanently that are interesting, not thinking immanence philosophically."[20] Philosophy – with its Decisional auto-positional structure – is constitutively unable to account for itself, which leaves non-philosophy as the sole means to do so.[21] What this entails is that

18 "Not only is the difference between unobjectifiable immanence and objectifying transcendence only operative on the side of the latter; more importantly, the duality between this difference and the real's indifference to it becomes operative if, and only if, thinking *effectuates* the real's foreclosure to objectification by determining the latter in-the-last-instance." *NU*, p. 142.

19 *AT*, p. 128.

20 R. Brassier, 'Axiomatic Heresy: The Non-Philosophy of Francois Laruelle', *Radical Philosophy* 121 (2003), p. 33, hereafter *AH*.

21 As a pre-emptive retort to scientistic critics, we would add that even science has its own forms of Decision, as Brassier outlines with respect to W.V.O. Quine and Paul Churchland. As a result, even science and the study of neurology and cognitive psychology cannot ultimately provide a full account of philosophy (c.f. *AT*, pp. 165–215).

philosophy is not merely an extraneous, impotent and ultimate useless endeavour. Rather, from the perspective of non-philosophy, philosophy itself must be taken as the material without which non-philosophy would be inoperative (while, for its part, the Real would remain indifferent regardless). The operation performed here, as we will now see, is given the name of 'cloning' by Laruelle. It is this approach which will suspend the self-sufficiency of philosophical thought and remove the limits imposed by a particular philosophy in order to attain a thinking in accordance with the Real. In other words, we are entering onto the terrain of the non-philosophical subject.

2. THE NON-PHILOSOPHICAL SUBJECT

Cloning, in a general sense, refers to the way in which philosophy can be acted upon by the Real through non-philosophical thinking. Given a philosophical system, the initial step of cloning is to locate the specific dyad constitutive of its Decision. Next, the 'real' term is isolated, broken apart from its constitutive relation to the other 'ideal' term. For instance, the virtual would be isolated from the actual in Deleuze's system as the term designating its pretension to grasp Being. Lastly, this real term "is identified *as the Real*, an 'as if' identification that *performs* rather than represents the Real."[22] In this subtle shift, non-philosophy effectively instantiates its experimental approach: it operates through the hypothetical question of 'what if this philosophy was not about the Real, but rather determined by the Real?' Cloning, in other words, suspends the auto-sufficiency of philosophical Decision in order to open it onto determination-in-the-last-instance by radical immanence.

Considering the significance of this notion of determination-in-the-last-instance, it is important to provide some clarification about its nature. The most recent use of this concept comes from Louis Althusser who used it to explain how the base and superstructure operated together. Contrary to standard Marxism, Althusser accorded the superstructure some measure of relative autonomy, while nevertheless arguing that the economy was determining-in-the-last-instance. This entailed that while

22 *PP*, p. 146.

the superstructure had some effective power within social formations, it was the economy which ultimately determined how much power it had. The determination-in-the-last-instance determined the effective framework for the relative autonomy of the superstructure. What Laruelle criticizes in this account, however, is the ultimately relative nature of the determination-in-the-last-instance – the fact that it finds its last instance in the economy rather than Real immanence. As he will argue, "The Real is not, properly speaking, an "instance" or a "sphere," or eventually a "region," to the degree that, by definition, it does not belong to the thought-world or to the World – this is the meaning of the "last instance.""[23] Whereas Althusser relativizes the last-instance to the economy, thereby incorporating it within a philosophical Decision as to the nature of materialism, Laruelle will argue for the last-instance to stem from the properly non-philosophical understanding of matter. The last-instance, for Laruelle, must escape any sort of relative and regional determination – as an empirically given base, or as a relative structuralist position. Only the Real as radical immanence can provide a sufficient base, otherwise one invariably makes the last-instance relative to its philosophical definition.

Similarly, 'determination' also undergoes a non-philosophical reinvention. As Laruelle says, ""Determination" is not an auto-positional act, a Kantian-critical operation of the primacy of the determination over the determined. Here the reverse primacy is already announced without a return to dogmatism, yet still under an ambiguous form. It is the determined, the real as matter-without-determination, that makes the determination."[24] The determined here is the real as last-instance – that presupposition of philosophy which itself escapes from all philosophical determination as the always-already determined in-itself. It determines, in turn, the philosophical world, acting as the last-instance which determines the framework for the relative autonomy of philosophy. The nature of this determination, however, must also escape from all metaphysical concepts of causation: "It is not an ontic and regional concept with a physico-chemical or linguistic-structuralist model: nor ontological (formal, final, efficient, and...material, which Marx forgets to exclude with the other

23 F. Laruelle, *Introduction au non-Marxism*. (PUF: Paris, 2000), pp. 43, hereafter *NM*. Translation provided by Taylor Adkins.

24 *NM*, 45.

forms of metaphysical causality)."[25] As such, it is a type of determination which is itself indifferent to what it determines. This entails that the real as last-instance must take up two simultaneous readings: "in order not to render immanence relative to that which it transcendentally determines, Laruelle will carefully distinguish immanence as a *necessary* but negative condition, as *sine qua non* for the relation of determination, from its effectuation as transcendentally determining condition insofar as this is *contingently* occasioned by the empirical[26] instance that it necessarily determines."[27]

It is cloning which effectuates the second aspect, by suspending the auto-sufficiency of the intra-philosophical conditions (which comprise a vicious circle), and opening them onto the transcendental conditions for the particular empirical instance determined-in-the-last-instance by radical immanence. What is cloned, however? The real foreclosure of the Real to Decision is cloned *as* a non-philosophical transcendental thought foreclosed to Decision. These two foreclosures are themselves Identical-in-the-last-instance, yet the Real itself is foreclosed to the clone (i.e. non-philosophical thought). We must be careful to distinguish then, between the Real foreclosure of radical immanence and the transcendental foreclosure of non-philosophical thought. This non-philosophical thinking, in the end, simply is the "unilateral duality" established between the Real *qua* determining force and Decision *qua* determinable material. It is the "force-(of)-thought" or the "organon" as the determining instance through which the philosophical material has its pretensions to absolute autonomy suspended by being taken as material determined-in-the-last-instance by the Real. Or, to put it in other words, non-philosophical thought doubles the separation 'between' immanence and philosophy with a transcendental unilateral duality 'between' the force-(of)-thought and the specific philosophical material in question. Importantly, the philosophical instance which provides the material from which the Real's foreclosure can be cloned is itself *non-determining* – i.e. there is no subtle reintegration of a bilateral relation between thought and the Real here.

25 *NM*, 45.

26 'Empirical' here refers to philosophy as the occasional cause suitable as material for non-philosophy. From the perspective of non-philosophy, all philosophical Decisions are equal and open to being used as 'empirical' material.

27 *AT*, 180.

Rather, the unilateral duality – as the non-relation between the clone and Decision – guarantees their non-reciprocity.

This unilateral duality must be carefully distinguished from the more common notion of a unilateral relation. Whereas philosophy has typically taken the unilateral relation to be one where "*X* distinguishes itself from *Y* without *Y* distinguishing itself from *X* in return",[28] it has also inevitably reintroduced a reciprocal relation at a higher level – that of the philosopher overlooking the relation from a transcendent position. In non-philosophy, this is clearly untenable. Instead, what unilateral duality refers to is the way in which philosophy distinguishes itself from the force-(of)-thought, but with an additional unilateralizing of the initial unilateral duality. Thus, the distinction between the force-(of)-thought and philosophy is operative *only* on the side of philosophy. Only within philosophy can one presume to take a transcendent perspective on its (non-)separation from philosophy (this, again, points to the illusory self-sufficiency of the philosophical Decision). In the end, and despite some loose use of words earlier to ease the reader into non-philosophy, it must always be remembered that only philosophy institutes relations. Non-philosophy and the Real itself are Identical-in-One in-the-last-instance; or to put it a bit more paradoxically: non-philosophy only has one term – philosophy *qua* material.

Once we have been given the occasioning instance of philosophical material and given the process of non-philosophical cloning, the question to be asked is who or what carries out this transformation? To whom – if that can even be properly asked – is this non-Decisional thinking occurring to? Here we enter into the subjectivity of non-Philosophy – what Laruelle has called "the Stranger" and Brassier the "Alien-subject". In fact, we have already been grasping towards the non-philosophical subject in our preceding discussion of the force-(of)-thought and the transcendental clone – all of these terms ultimately point towards the non-Decisional subject as that which acts in accordance with Real immanence to determine-in-the-last-instance particular philosophical Decisions.

Following upon these initial reflections, and recalling its foreclosure to the Decisional circle, it should be clear that the non-philosophical subject must – much like Badiou's subject – be radically non-intuitable, non-phenomenological, non-empirical, non-reflexive and non-conceptual.

28 *AH*, p. 27.

As with non-philosophy, the 'non-' here refers not to a simple negation, but rather a radical foreclosure of the subject to philosophical dyads like intuition/concept, phenomena/phenomenality, materialism/idealism, etc. The subject is simply indifferent to these philosophical characterizations, being always already given prior to any Decisional dyad. As Brassier will claim, the non-philosophical subject is instead "simply a *function* ..., an axiomatizing organon, a transcendental computer."[29] Or in other words, the subject is performative: it simply is what it does.[30]

What is it that the subject does? It carries out the operation involved in unilateral duality. This is the key point – the non-philosophical subject simply *is* the unilateral duality through which the Real as determining power determines a philosophical Decision as determinable instance, without itself being reciprocally determined by philosophy. This encompasses the basic structure of non-philosophical theory. The act of cloning, therefore, takes the empirico-transcendental hybrid of philosophical Decision and uncovers the non-philosophical subject as the transcendental condition which has (always-already) unilateralized this reciprocal relation by suspending the auto-sufficiency of the philosophical Dyad. From the separateness-without-separation between immanence and Decision, we are shifted to the unilateral duality carried out by the non-philosophical subject. In this way, the subject, as the force-(of)-thought, is both the cause *and* the object of its own knowledge – it determines its own knowledge of itself.[31]

The subject then, as the act of unilateralizing, requires two distinct causes – a necessary, but necessarily insufficient Real cause (determination-in-the-last-instance) and a sufficient, but necessarily contingent occasional cause (philosophy as contingently given). On the

29 *AH*, pp. 30–1.

30 This also entails the counter-intuitive claim, again like Badiou's own subject, that there is no necessary relation between the subject of non-philosophy and what has typically been labeled subjectivity in philosophy (i.e. self-reflective consciousness as the property solely of humans). As an ontological function, the non-philosophical subject could also be manifested as something utterly inhuman and machinic.

31 "This identity of cause and known object is essential, since one of the characteristics that distinguishes materialism from non-philosophy is materialism's tendency to divide the material cause and the philosophical theory of this cause." (*NM*, pp. 48–49)

one hand, the former necessarily determines the unilateral duality through which the subject effectuates the Real's foreclosure to Decision. Yet, in itself it is not sufficient; the Real is indifferent to thought and to philosophy. As a result, non-philosophy requires the latter cause as the occasional instance from which it can transform philosophical material from self-sufficiency to relative autonomy by effectuating a thought in accordance with the Real (achieved through the process of cloning). This latter cause makes the subject always a Stranger *for* the philosophical 'world'[32] whose Decisional structure it suspends. In this sense, we can draw a loose form of logical time, wherein we proceed from the Real as always-already-given to the instance of philosophy as given through its own mode of givenness (its self-sufficiency) to, finally, non-philosophy as the transformation of philosophy and a cloning of a thought in accordance with the Real.

Through this transformation, we can clearly see that the non-philosophical subject must (of necessity if it is to act alongside the Real) be foreclosed to the world as the realm opened by philosophical Decision. As such, this subject functions as a locus equally irreducible to its socio-historical context, the constituting power of language, power, or culture, and any relational system philosophy might generate. It functions, in other words, as an always-already-given (in-the-last-instance) non-space from which it becomes possible to suspend and criticize the dominant horizon of phenomena. "Consequently, the distinction is not so much between the world and another realm of practice in-itself, or between the world and a transcendent realm of practice, but between two ways of relating to the world, one governed by the world, the other determined-according-to the Real."[33] We thus have two conceptions of the subject – on the one hand, the more traditional subject as that entity (or function or position) occupying a world, supported by the illusion of philosophy's self-sufficiency, and determined by the phenomenological coordinates it sets out. On the other hand, the non-philosophical subject which is engendered from philosophy as occasional cause and which takes philosophy as material to be thought in accordance with the Real or as determined-in-the-last-instance. Thus, we can see why Laruelle will claim that, "the problem is how to use philosophy so as to effect a real

32 'World' here refers to the space opened by philosophical Decision as that which is philosophizable (which from its own perspective is everything).

33 *WC*, p. 181.

transformation of the subject in such a way as to allow it to break the spell of its bewitchment by the world and enable it to constitute itself through a struggle with the latter."[34]

As we will see in our discussion in the next section, however, the question of the non-philosophical subject's intervention in the world must negotiate around the pitfalls involved in the philosophical elaboration of 'intervention'.[35] The immediate consequence of the philosophical concept of intervention is that since philosophy is itself responsible for the determination of what 'reality' is, any intervention into that reality will already be circumscribed within the idealist structure of Decision. It takes as given its own conditions for practice and validates them by measuring all practice against that philosophically established standard. Philosophical practice, therefore, remains formally encompassed within its constitutive horizon, even when that horizon is given as a field of multiplicity or difference that nominally privileges becoming and transformation. The constitutive horizon of these philosophies of difference nevertheless limits practice and limits thought to the phenomenological parameters provided by the philosophical Decision, while simultaneously prohibiting any transformation of that horizon itself.[36] Moreover, the very act of intervention, by relying upon the philosophical Decision which makes it intelligible, ultimately reinstates and reproduces the world despite any attempts at intra-worldly transformation. In this specific sense, philosophical intervention can be seen as self-defeating. Contrary to philosophical intervention which aims to intervene *in* the world, the non-philosophical subject will take the world (i.e. the empirico-transcendental doublet auto-generated by Decision) as its object to transform.

34 *WC*, p. 179.

35 *WC*, pp. 183–4.

36 As Brassier will note, one of the main consequences of the self-sufficiency of Decision is that since each Decision takes itself to be absolute, each is forced to regard alternative Decisions as mutually exclusive. It is a war of philosophy against philosophy (*AT*, p. 126).

3. THE CAPITALIST SOCIUS

With this discussion of the non-philosophical subject we have seen how it is possible to take up the perspective of the Real radically foreclosed to philosophy. In this way, the self-sufficiency of the philosophical Decision is suspended and made only relatively autonomous with respect to the determination-in-the-last-instance of the Real itself. While the non-philosophical subject provides this possibility, it relies on the empirical given of a philosophical or ideological system which it can use as material for its cloning. In this regard, it is not simply an abstract movement of thought, but is rather intimately intertwined with the particular philosophical systems providing our contemporary phenomenological coordinates, using them as occasional causes for thinking in accordance with the Real.

Katerina Kolozova has provided an exemplary instance of this in analyzing present-day gender theory from the non-philosophical perspective.[37] Her own ruminations have shown the capacity for individual resistance to the constituting forces of power and knowledge, evoking a unitary subject irreducible to the field of socio-historical constructions. However, while her work is a great addition as a counterweight to the unending discussions of discourse and culture, it is our contention that the most pertinent Decisional field in our present situation is not gender theory.

Our aim here, on the contrary, will be to tackle the currently hegemonic Decision providing the matrix within which nearly every contemporary phenomenon appears. In our own age, there is little doubt that it is capitalism which provides this dominant – and arguably all-encompassing – horizon through which various objects, subjectivities, desires, beliefs and appearances are constituted. Capitalism, in other words, is the philosophical structure presently given to us as material for the non-philosophical subject to operate with.[38]

37 K. Kolozova, *The Real and "I": On the Limit and the Self* (Skopje: Euro-Balkan Press, 2006), hereafter *RI*.

38 Brassier also speaks of capitalism and non-philosophy in the conclusion of *Alien Theory*, but despite the undeniable brilliance of the rest of the dissertation and *Nihil Unbound*, his concluding proposals come across as overly optimistic.

Before proceeding, however, let us make clear that we are not suggesting that the capitalist Decisional structure was the result of some philosophical act of thought, as though its mere positing in thought were sufficient to bring about its effective reality. Rather, the Decisional structure has been the unintentional product of the numerous and varied social practices which led to capitalism. In good Marxist fashion, we are suggesting that society acted in a manner that constructed its own self-sufficient circle – a manner which only later became replicated in thought. Instead of everything being material for philosophy, everything is material for capitalist valorization. We will all too briefly return to these ideas in the conclusion.

With this in mind, it is easy to see that it is Deleuze and Guattari who have provided us with the most explicit model of how capitalism installs itself as a self-sufficient structure – specifically, through their concept of the capitalist socius. In their analysis, capital (as with all the modes of social-production) has the property of appearing as its own cause: "It falls back on all production constituting a surface over which the forces and agents of production are distributed, thereby appropriating for itself all surplus production and arrogating to itself both the whole and the parts of the process, which now seem to emanate from it as a quasi cause."[39] This socius (whether capitalist or not) acts as an effect produced by society and its multiplicity of relations and forces of production; yet once produced it functions to unify the disparate social practices into a coherent whole. While achieving this unification through the regulation of social relations in accordance with its image of the whole, the socius simultaneously comes to organize the productive and cooperative practices it originally emerged from. For example, capital deterritorializes archaic social formations in order to reterritorialize the released material flows in a temporary, but exploitative relation – conjoining heterogeneous flows of labor and capital in order to convert them into quantities from which surplus-value can be extracted. Furthermore, capital becomes an all-encompassing productive force in that it ends up producing even subjectivity itself – hence the mobile, flexible worker of contemporary neoliberalism is a product of the deterritorialization carried out by capital,[40] being produced as a residue of the process (a similar process occurs with the consumer). (a similar process occurs with the consumer).

39 G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), p. 10.

(a similar process occurs with the consumer). In a very real sense, therefore, the socius both causes the mode of production[41] to emerge and is produced as an effect of it. This is a paradoxical claim, and one worth looking at again in more detail in order to clearly understand the logic. On one hand, it is clear that there is a historical process involved in producing the particular mode of production – i.e. the socius is an effect *of* the inventive and constituent power of the multitude; it is produced by their labor power, prior to any appropriation by capital. But on the other hand, with the emergence of capitalism, capital itself begins to *quasi cause* production by coercing it and employing constituent power within its functioning. What occurs then, is a sort of asymptotical approach towards the particular mode of production on the level of the historical processes; and then – in a moment of auto-positioning – the socius itself emerges simultaneously as both cause and effect, as both presupposing its empirical reality (through the productive power of the multitude) and positing its *a priori* horizon (the full body of capital), while positing as presupposed their synthesis in a transcendental unity (the Body without Organs, or BwO, as the absolute condition, or the plane of absolutely deterritorialized flows). While counterintuitive, this claim should nevertheless be familiar from our reading of the structure of philosophical Decision. As a ubiquitous structure, we should not be surprised to discern it operating in a variety of fields. Thus we can clearly see that the "philosophical" Decision is as much a "political" Decision as an "economic" Decision.[42] In this regard, Steven Shaviro has recently provided a particularly illuminating description of this capitalist Decisional structure:

40 Even in its briefly liberating phase, the flexible subject was a reaction against (and hence relied upon) the Fordist mode of production. See: P. Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2004), pp. 98–9.

41 Following Jason Read, we will use 'modes of production' in an expanded sense to include the production of subjectivity, desires, beliefs, along with the more common material basis. See: J. Read, *The Micro-Politics of Capital: Marx and the Prehistory of the Present* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003).

42 Or more specifically, Decision is not intrinsically philosophical at all – just as Brassier argues that philosophy is not intrinsically Decisional. Rather, Decision constitutes an important mechanism which subsumes everything within its purview; one which is operative in a variety of domains.

> The socius, or "full body of capital," is entirely composed of material processes in the phenomenal world; and yet, as the limit and the summation of all these processes, it has a quasi-transcendental status. That is to say, the body of capital is not a particular phenomenon that we encounter at a specific time and place; it is rather the already-given presupposition of whatever phenomenon we *do* encounter. We cannot experience this capital-body directly, and for itself; yet all our experiences are lodged within it, and can properly be regarded as its effects. The monstrous flesh of capital is the horizon, or the matrix, or the underlying location and container of our experience, as producers or as consumers. In this sense, it can indeed be regarded as something like what Kant would call a transcendental condition of experience. Or better – since it is a process, rather than a structure or an entity – it can be understood as what Deleuze and Guattari call a basic "synthesis" that generates and organizes our experience.[43]

It is this complex structure – which includes the "material processes in the phenomenal world", the "capital-body" as the socius organizing the practices, and the BwO as the immanent synthesis of these two terms – which we will subject to the non-Decisional method.

By making the self-sufficiency of capitalism explicit, we are in a position that allows us to begin to explain a number of important contemporary phenomena – most notably, the real subsumption carried out by capitalism. With this notion, it has been declared that capitalism constitutively has no outside – all of society, including everyday innocuous socializing processes, becomes productive for capital as it shifts to immaterial labor. As such, resistance cannot place itself in an external relation to capitalism, and tends to instead work solely with immanent tendencies – tendencies that are unfortunately all too easily reincorporated within capitalism. However, the recognition of capitalism as an instance of the auto-positing structure of Decision already gives us a non-philosophical – or rather, a non-capitalist – perspective on this situation. We can see that the reason for our present inability to escape the world of capitalist Decision is because it constitutes the Real in its own

43 S. Shaviro, 'The Body of Capital', *The Pinocchio Theory.* (2008) <http://www.shaviro.com/Blog/?p=641> [accessed 26 June 2008]

inescapable terms. In the same way that philosophy makes everything material for philosophy, so too does capitalism make everything material for productive valorization. Moreover, as our earlier discussion of philosophical intervention pointed out, practice based within the world opened by a Decision is necessarily incapable of affecting the horizon of that world; at best, it can reconfigure aspects given in the world without being able to transform the mode of givenness of the world. So political action based within the world will inevitably fail at revolution (as the radical transformation from one Decision to another). What is required is a transformation of this capitalist structure and a concomitant transformation of the corresponding subject.[44]

In this project, Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt's work – despite its flaws – is indispensible. Heavily borrowing from Deleuze and Guattari, Negri and Hardt have re-fashioned the 'productive forces/capitalist socius' dyad in terms of the 'multitude/capital' and the 'constituent/constituted power' dyads. In their works, the multitude is a political body both produced from common cooperation and productive of the common, as the residual product of the multitude's cooperation. So, for example, everyday interactions involving social and affective knowledge are both the source of cooperation and the production of community. The problem is that with the hegemony[45] of immaterial labour (e.g. service and knowledge-based industries), capitalism has taken these immediately creative and productive capacities of the multitude and integrated them within its operations. The reliance of the capitalist socius on the social and affective knowledge of the multitude, moreover, is reciprocated by capital's production of subjectivity. Capital and surplus-value are, in other words, produced by the labour of the multitude, yet at the same time responsible for inciting, incorporating, organizing and creating the multitude (even its 'free time') – effectively establishing a self-sufficient circle.

44 "It [i.e. non-philosophy] transforms the subject by transforming instances of philosophy." F. Laruelle, "A New Presentation of Non-Philosophy" <http://www.onphi.net/texte-a-new-presentation-of-non-philosophy-32.html> [accessed 15 July 2008], hereafter *NP*.

45 To be clear, hegemony does not mean quantitative majority – rather the hegemony of immaterial labour points to the way in which it shifts *all* forms of labour according to its precepts. For example, even industrial labour has begun to incorporate and rely upon immaterial labour in its production process.

To suspend capitalism's pretension at self-sufficiency, we will therefore initially take the capitalist dyad of multitude/capital or constituent/constitutive power and separate the real term – multitude – from its reliance on the opposing term.[46] We must now suspend any philosophical or *capitalist* constitution of the multitude and instead take it as an axiom determined-in-the-last-instance by the Real itself. Thus, whereas Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt will submit the multitude to a dyadic relation with capital, and philosophically determine the nature of real immanence, non-philosophy forecloses this possibility by positing the multitude as always already given-without-givenness – prior to any enmeshment in Marxist discourse or systems of social relations. The non-philosophical multitude[47] is cloned as the transcendental conditions foreclosed to the operations of the capitalist socius. Which is also to say that the multitude *performs* the Real, acts in accordance with it, prior to any incorporation within the capitalist or philosophical Decision. Moreover, it is this non-capitalist multitude which effectively acts as the Identity (without-unity) underlying its various, heterogeneous worldly appearances. Kolozova's work points the way towards this, by re-conceiving Identity in non-philosophical terms as that invariant = X irreducible to any sort of linguistic, conceptual, or relational determination.[48] In her work these socio-historical determinations are

46 Multitude is clearly the real term of the dyad because Negri and Hardt assert that a constituent power has no need for constituted power – i.e. it is ontologically sufficient in-itself, with capital being merely a secondary parasitic body. The problem, as with all Decisions, is that despite its materialist pretensions, the very form of philosophizing involved surreptitiously makes the immanence of the multitude dependent upon the constituted powers it struggles against. In a very real way, this Decisional enmeshing of the two reveals why Negri and Hardt come across as overly optimistic in their claims that the multitude can surpass and extricate itself from capital – as though the real world made clear their Decisional synthesis, despite Negri and Hardt's claims to the contrary.

47 An important caveat: the non-capitalist multitude, as foreclosed to capitalist determination, must necessarily be left unqualified by determining predicates like 'class' and 'proletariat'. 'Multitude' is instead an axiomatic here; a name of the Real posited by the Real itself as always-already foreclosed to capitalism. We can't, in other words, say 'what' this multitude is – merely that it is and that it is determining-in-the-last-instance. The difficulty, as we will cover in the conclusion, is how to incorporate this instance of the already-determined-without-determination into politics.

48 *RI*, pp. 4-30.

carried out by structures of power and language, as explicated by constructivist gender theory. The (non-)multitude, on the other hand, takes capitalism as the determining world which it remains irreducible or foreclosed to. In either case, however, the Real invariant always already retains the potential to resist and refuse the determinations imposed upon it. Unlike the singularities constitutive of Negri and Hardt's multitude, the non-capitalist subject, the force-(of)-thought specific to capitalism, is determined-in-the-last-instance by a Real radically indifferent to its capitalist enmeshment. Instead of Negri and Hardt's singularity, Laruelle will speak of a radical solitude proper to the non-philosophical subject, to mark its irreducibility to any worldly determination, even class, gender, race and ethnicity.[49] It is the implicitly presupposed, yet non-posited immanence of capitalism.

Therefore, what the non-philosophical take has to offer over and above the philosophical conception of the multitude is an always already given locus of resistance to any form of control by capitalism. As Shaviro has pointed out,[50] what is ultimately naively utopian about Negri and Hardt's concept of the multitude is its valorization of the multitude's creativity without the simultaneous recognition that it is *capitalism* that incites, organizes and appropriates this creativity. Despite Negri and Hardt's optimism, their conception of the multitude therefore remains irreducibly intertwined with capital. In these regards, the multitude offers no exit from capitalism, but is instead simply a creative power *for* capitalism's self-perpetuation.[51] Non-philosophy, on the other hand, *separates* (in the non-philosophical sense) the multitude as Real force-(of)-thought from its immersion in the capitalist world. It indexes a territory incapable of being colonized by capital's imperialist ambitions – one where capitalism's tendency to reduce all of being to commodities and tools for capitalism is always already suspended and where the Real itself determines the nature

49 We can see Negri and Hardt's reintroduction of singularity into the world through their description of the multitude as a class concept, even if it is distinguished from traditional class concepts. See: A. Negri, "Towards an Ontological Definition of Multitude" tr. Arriana Bove <http://multitudes.samizdat.net/spip.php?article269> [accessed 15 July 2008].

50 S. Shaviro. 'Monstrous Flesh', *The Pinocchio Theory.* (2008) <http://www.shaviro.com/Blog/?p=639> [accessed 26 June 2008]

51 This also has parallels to Žižek's critique of Deleuze and Guattari as the archetypal philosophers of capitalism – espousing endless creativity, and novel products and modes of jouissance that are all perfectly compatible with capitalism.

of the capitalist world. In doing so, both thought *and* practice remove the limits imposed upon them by capitalism, framed as they were by the horizon of the capital-body. New options, unimaginable for capitalism, become available to thought and practice. The new options can not be intentionally accessed, of course, but the non-philosophical subject (the multitude, in our non-capitalism) becomes capable of acting in accordance with the Real in such a way that is not bound by the strictures of phenomenological legitimation, thereby opening the space for an event incommensurable with the dominant Decision.[52]

Yet, what are we left with after all this theoretical elaboration? We have tried to show that non-philosophy opens a space beyond any philosophical or capitalist Decision, thereby offering an always-already-given locus of resistance. This space also makes possible the advent of a radically new determination (from the perspective of the world). But we have no way in which to effectively *use* this space for resisting capitalism. The use of this space requires a project to work towards, which in turn appears to necessarily entail some philosophical world provided by a Decision. In some ways, we have reached the limit of Laruelle's non-philosophy – at least in terms of developing a political project based on it. As Brassier will say, "there can be no 'ethics of radical immanence' and consequently no ethics of non-philosophy. The very notion of an 'ethics of immanence' is another instance of the way in which philosophical decision invariably subordinates immanence to a transcendental teleological horizon."[53] Non-philosophy thus appears as a significant and important rejoinder to philosophical (or political, as we saw) pretensions, limiting philosophy in much the same way that Kant limited metaphysics. But beyond this it can make no positive pronouncements in itself. This is perhaps unsurprising, since as we mentioned earlier, non-philosophy is largely an explanatory framework, seeking to heteronomously explain philosophy's relative autonomy, or in this case, capitalism's purported self-sufficiency.

52 Despite some overt similarities, this idea of deregulating philosophical limits goes beyond even the absolute deterritorialization espoused by Deleuze and Guattari. Whereas the latter remains a hybrid synthetic unity of the terms it separates, the "beyond" of non-philosophy is foreclosed to any such dyad. In this way it remains radically immanent and radically foreclosed to any decisional determination or limitation. For more on Deleuze and Guattari's plane of immanence as a hybrid, c.f. *AT*, p. 54-84.

53 *AH*, p. 33.

4. CONCLUSION

In our conclusion, we will try and resist this dead-end by turning towards some more speculative propositions concerning possible political extensions of non-philosophy. Brassier hints at these options when he criticizes Laruelle's universal claims about Decisions (i.e. that all philosophy is constituted by a Decisional structure).[54] Rather than reducing philosophy to a simple invariant and content-less structure, non-philosophy must realize its claims about Decision are localizable within only a portion of philosophy's history. With this de-universalization of Laruelle's claims, the door is now open for methods of non-philosophy *other* than the ones Laruelle outlines. A careful thinker could both escape the Decisional structure of auto-positing *and* escape the methods used by Laruelle (such as cloning).[55] These new methods, therefore, can be used to develop philosophical themes in a non-philosophical manner alongside the Real. Meillassoux's project seems to us to be an example of this possibility, operating not through some delineation of transcendental and empirical structures, but rather through a logical argument aimed at undermining the limits of a typical philosophical position (correlationism). With a specific focus on the political aspects we are concerned with here, it can be seen that a non-Decisional form of philosophy need not necessarily be reduced to the weak and inefficacious politics of Laruelle's own version of non-Decisional philosophy. Instead, a more fully developed (non-)politics could be constructed that makes use of the transcendental locus of resistance offered by non-philosophy, while also integrating it into the capitalist world through a productive political subject and project.

With this recognition, it becomes possible to conceive of a non-philosophical attempt to produce *within* the world, a new Decisional space, i.e. a new world. This line of thought stems from two pieces of evidence. First, the earlier claim that capitalism was the result of a *historical* process that emerged from the concerted effort of innumerable workers and individuals interacting with their natural environment.

54 *NU*, pp. 131-4.

55 Laruelle himself admits this possibility when he claims "non-philosophy [may] not yet represent the most widely agreed upon mutation of foundation … *others are still obviously possible* and will be, in any event, sought by generations which will not, like ours, let themselves be enclosed in their history" *NP*, emphasis added.

Historically, it is clear that capitalism, despite being a self-sufficient structure, had relations in some sense with the pre-capitalist world. This suggests the possibility of constructing new Decisions within the given world. But this claim must rest upon our second piece of evidence: Laruelle's argument for the 'non-sufficiency' of the Real. In his words:

> the One … in no way produces philosophy or the World … - there is no real genesis of philosophy. This is the *non-sufficiency* of the One as necessary but non-sufficient condition. … A givenness of philosophy is thus *additionally* necessary if the vision-in-One is to give philosophy according to its own mode of being-given. … The vision-in-One gives philosophy *if* a philosophy presents itself. But philosophy gives itself according to the mode of its own self-positing/givenness/reflection/naming, or according to that of a widened self-consciousness or universal *cogito*.[56]

The Real itself does not give philosophy (or rather, Decision), but must instead rely upon the contingent occasion of a philosophy giving itself "according to the mode of its own self-positing / givenness / reflection / naming". The reason for this is because the unilateral relation permits only philosophy to distinguish itself from immanence. The Real itself does not distinguish itself from philosophy, remaining indifferent to its transcendence, and so the occasioning cause necessary for non-philosophical thought (i.e. philosophy as material) requires that philosophy give itself according to its own mode of givenness. Without the latter operation, there would never be any transcendence from which non-philosophy could operate. The question that is immediately raised here is where does this givenness of philosophy come from? A purely *ex nihilo* incarnation would seem to suggest a space irreducible to both immanence and philosophy – something which would seem *a priori* impossible in a system premised on determination-in-the-last-instance by the Real. The more plausible answer is that the givenness of novel philosophical Decisions is produced in a non-reductive manner through the material of previous philosophical worlds. Using our example of capitalism, the shift from a pre-capitalist formation to a properly capitalist formation can be seen as an unintentional and contingent result of the shifting relations between forces and relations of production (including

56 F. Laruelle, 'A Summary of Non-Philosophy', *Pli* 8 (1999), p. 142.

the subjectivities produced). Which means that while the Real may be the determination-in-the-last-instance, the phenomenological world within which we *qua* individuals operate appears to in some sense overdetermine the Real. As mentioned previously, unlike Althusser, the overdetermination here would not be determined-in-the-last-instance by some fundamental contradiction, but instead by the radically foreclosed Real.[57] Moreover, overdetermination would also remain foreclosed to determining the Real, instead sufficing to determine the contingent progression of philosophical Decisions through intra-worldly transformations. Such a proposition would remain within the ambits of non-philosophy by refusing to establish a philosophical dyad, instead merely taking non-philosophy's requirement for material at its word – even the novel worldly formations determined-in-the-last-instance by the Real require some material to be always-already given.

Most importantly, this notion of intra-worldly transformation simultaneously proposes the distinct possibility of a collective subject operating *within* the Decisional space. Acting in accordance with the Real, such a collective group would entail both an identity-in-the-last-instance with the Real (by virtue of being determined by it) *and* a duality-without-synthesis effectuated by the unilateral relation carried out from philosophy's reflective perspective.[58] Such a subject would of necessity be foreclosed to any definite identifying predicates such as class, race, gender, or even minority status. The corollary to this requirement would be the counter-intuitive claim that any sociological group could have the possibility to act in accordance with radical immanence, simply by taking up this simultaneous identity and duality involved there.[59] In relation to our earlier discussion of the non-philosophical subject, this intra-worldly subject would act as the phenomenal manifestation of that non-philosophical subject. We must be careful here, however – this 'manifestation' would be an *event*, but a non-philosophical form of event

57 L. Althusser, 'Overdetermination and Contradiction' in *For Marx*, trans. by Ben Brewster (New York: Verso, 2005), pp. 106-7.

58 To be clear, it is an identity, by virtue of being identical with radical immanence (which does not distinguish itself from anything), and a duality by virtue of effectuating a unilateral duality from the internal perspective of philosophy.

59 Although this claim should be less counter-intuitive when it is recalled that Marx saw in the bourgeoisie a revolutionary group, relative to its feudal origins. A revolutionary group need not be a progressive group, nor must it remain revolutionary.

that occurs without regard for any philosophical conception of the event, hindered as they are by a Decision which makes their concept the result of reducing temporal continuities in the name of the philosophical 'real' shining through.[60] In contrast to the intra-worldly events which occupy philosophy's attention, this non-philosophical event is properly an Advent of the philosophical world itself.[61] The collective subject would be the manifestation of a new world acting in accordance with a Real indifferent to the limitations of the present world. In what way then, does this Advent manifest itself phenomenally? It is worth quoting in full Laruelle's description:

> The Advent, we now know, does not lie at the world's horizon and is not the other side of that horizon (Heidegger). But neither can it be said to constitute an infinite of reverse verticality, of reverse transcendence which would pierce or puncture the horizon (Levinas). The Advent comes neither from afar nor from on high. It emerges as a radical solitude that it is impossible to manipulate, to dominate, to reduce, like the solitude of the great works of art... It no longer announces anything, it is neither absence nor presence nor even an 'other presence', but rather unique solitude given-in-One in-the-last-instance. It emerges as the identity of a unique face without a 'face to face'.[62]

It is in this manner that the Advent presents itself, with a portion being given in solitude (its immanent cause as determination-in-the-last-instance) and another portion relative to the world (from which it draws its material and occasional cause for its "unique face").[63] In this way it can both escape any determining constraints imposed upon the Real by the world, and use the world as a sufficient but non-necessary source of material. In other words, while we are always already determined in accordance with the Real, we are only phenomenalized as potential

60 "The event focuses within its apparently ineffable simplicity the entire structure of that which I call the philosophical Decision." F. Laruelle, 'Identity and Event', *Pli* 9 (2000), hereafter *IE*, pp. 177-8.

61 *IE*, p. 184.

62 *IE*, p. 186.

63 We earlier referred to this structure as its simultaneous identity (without-unity) and duality (without-synthesis).

political actors in the world, through the material provided by our contemporary Decisional structures. The intra-worldly subject, therefore, is merely the phenomenal face of the non-philosophical subject – the radical locus of resistance clothed in an arbitrary, yet non-determining, philosophical material. It is with this material clothing that we can function to effect transformations – not *in*, but *of* – the phenomenological world we inhabit.

Returning to our example of the pre-capitalist situation, we can perceive in its historical advent, the slow but persistent accumulation of philosophical material that eventually functioned as the occasional cause for a non-philosophical Advent. While the potential for determination-in-the-last-instance to be effectuated in non-philosophical thought is always already there, it is perhaps only in certain worldly moments that the self-sufficiency constitutive of the world becomes less than certain, thereby opening the space for the Advent of a non-philosophical subject capable of radically transforming the very horizon of Being.

What still remains to be thought, however, is the manner in which the solitude of the Advent can be transformed, or perhaps simply extended, into the type of full-fledged world in which we are normally given. What is required, in other words, is some functional equivalent to Badiou's concept of forcing, whereby the event is investigated and its findings integrated into a new situation.[64] With that project incomplete, the suspension of Decision and the advent of a non-philosophical subject can only constitute the necessary, but not yet sufficient, conditions for *constructing* new empirico-transcendental spaces incommensurable with the capitalist socius.

64 A. Badiou, *Being & Event* (New York: Continuum), pp. 410-30.

Pli 20 (2009), 55-79

After the Subject:

Meillassoux's Ontology of 'What May Be'

PETER GRATTON

It was not from the vast ventriloquism
Of sleep's faded papier-mache...

The sun was coming from the outside.

That scrawny cry--It was
A chorister whose c preceded the choir.
It was part of the colossal sun,

Surrounded by its choral rings,
Still far away. It was like
A new knowledge of reality.

Wallace Stevens, "Not Ideas about the Thing, but the Thing Itself"

Given the criticism of the poetic by the Quentin Meillassoux, it is not without a sense of irony that I begin this article with an epigram from the poet Wallace Stevens, whose work often founders between realism and what he often took to be the world-creating power of the imagination, which he dubbed "the one reality in this imagined world."[1] Nevertheless, I want to save him from the reading that suggests that his "poetry has to do not with a bare, alien reality but with a reality with which we are already in contact, a solid existing reality, a *world shot through with our*

1 In the poem "Another Weeping Woman," *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens* (New York: Vintage, 1990), p. 25.

cognitive, moral, and aesthetic values,"[2] since this is also a reading symptomatic of a modernity that has foreclosed considerations of the real *as such* in favor of a world thought as extending the reach of the human. If we are to consider what comes *after the subject*, we must not think reality as that which is "shot through" with our "ideas about the thing," but rather find access to a reality no longer dependent, as Stevens put it, on our "vast ventriloquism"—"our cognitive, moral, and aesthetic values"—which unavoidably keep us from a "new knowledge of reality" and the "thing itself." It may be, as Meillassoux suggests, that to broach this knowledge *poiêsis* itself needs to be deprivileged in favor of a reinvested *mathêsis* of being.[3] Only then, on that account, can we begin to think, paradoxically, that which is "coming from the outside" of thought.

The task of this essay, then, is to take up the contributions of Meillassoux's "speculative materialism" for thinking what he himself calls "the Great Outside" ("*le Grand dehors*")[4] that enjoys no reliance on the thinking subject and its various ventriloquisms, and thus would be there literally after the subject, whatever its values and meaning-giving acts—cognitive, aesthetic, moral, or otherwise. But Meillassoux's speculative materialism is important in another sense for thinking what comes 'after the subject', since, as in Foucault's now paradigmatic account of the 'death of man', Meillassoux takes it as his project to rethink the dominant mode in which subjectivity has been considered in modernity. Foucault, as is well known, attempted in *Les mots et les choses* to mark the historical turning away from an 'episteme' that began with Kant and marked a discursive formation in which what Foucault called 'the transcendental doublet' of man and his representations predominated. For Foucault, Kant's notion of constitution was crucial to the modern inception of man, and the discursive period since has been one long attempt to work out the finitude of the human as both the transcendental being that 'constitutes' reality (for example, Kant's categories of the understanding, or the existential care structure of Dasein

2 Simon Critchley, *Things Merely Are: Philosophy in the Poetry of Wallace Stevens* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 53, my emphasis.

3 This claim is in line with the work of Meillassoux's mentor, Alain Badiou, whose critique of Heideggerian and post-Heideggerian approaches is their dead-end in poetics: "As regards the question of truth," Badiou argues, "the Heideggerian edifice leaves no solution other than the poem" (*Pli* 12, 2001, pp. 247-255; 247).

4 Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, Trans. Ray Brassier, (London: Continuum, 2008), p. 26, hereafter, *AF*.

in the early Heidegger) and as one entity among others encountered in and through this constitution.[5] Foucault ends *Les mots et les choses* with a wager, that this discursive era of thinking transcendent human being as constitutive of the real has an expiration date, at which point the figure of man himself would be washed away "like a face drawn in the sand at the edge of the sea."[6]

For Foucault, what was to come after the subject was not the end of human ventriloquism and a new knowledge of reality, but rather the dissolution of human transcendence into discourses of knowledge that were productive of all manner of concepts, including the figure of man himself. After the subject, then, lay the human sciences, imaginable to the Foucault of his archaeological period in bare outline, which would study man as but one signifier in the sea of discourse that had washed him away. What would come to an end, then, was the conceptualization of the self as having unmediated access to itself, without language, discourse, or other given social structures. The power of Foucault's analysis lay in his recognition that the post-Kantian philosophies of finitude, up to and including phenomenology, were kidding themselves in thinking they had displaced man from the center of the universe in a manner analogous to the Copernican revolution in science that de-centered the Earth from its place at the center of the cosmos. The revolution was only one in the oldest sense of the term, a return back to the same: man remained the

5 Meillassoux notes as well this paradox, and both he and Foucault argue that it's not, as in pre-critical philosophy, a problem relating simply to those persisting in accounts of representation (*AF*, p. 8). Rather, the problem is a dia-chronic oscillation between the constituted and the schematism that is the condition for the possibility for thinking that which is constituted. The body, for example, is at once a necessary condition for the transcendental, which on Kant's account is no less real than the body, which is intuited through the categories of the understanding. Logically *a posteriori*, the body points to an anterior space-time before the transcendental intelligibility in terms of space-time to which it gives rise, and thus is the condition of possibility for the transcendental understanding that can only *a posteriori* represent it (*AF*, p. 26). For Meillassoux, as we'll note, this *anteriority* of the space-time of the body marks the leap out of the correlationist circle to a time before the categories (available in Kant at the level of his argument) that "temporalizes and spatializes the emergence of living bodies," and opens us onto a "discourse" of a past when both "humanity and life are absent" (*AF*, p. 26).

6 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1971), p. 387.

measure of the universe, a finite locus whose meaning-giving acts held the key to signification and meaning. But in the end, Foucault's analysis merely shifted the old dualism between 'man and things' to 'words and things'. His archaeologies of epistemic shifts did little to close the gap between the latter,[7] and his later genealogies of power had the effect of rendering an era of Foucauldians mute, if not hostile, in the face of science, which was deemed to be implicated in power formations whose knowledge and disciplinary or bio-political force it reinscribed. The real had become political and far from sundering the transcendental-doublet, structuralism and post-structuralism, Meillassoux implicitly argues, reinforced the abyss of difference between words and things. They circumscribed their attention to the former while displacing, as in the work of Lacan, the real to a void forever lost among the play of signifiers. The thinking of reality *as it is* remained "outside" and "far away," in Stevens' words.

It is here that the radicality of Meillassoux's work must be felt. Meillassoux's contention is that the post-Kantian transcendental doublet, what he dubs "correlationism," has remained firmly in place, and philosophy has left the door open to all manner of ideologues and religious zealots eager to project their beliefs onto the noumenal on the other side of the phenomenal or discursive realm.[8] Meillassoux's work offers not so much a deconstruction or de-centering of metaphysical constructions of the subject as an attempted move to the "real" as heterogeneous to any relation to the subject. Meillassoux sets out to get human beings "out of ourselves" and thus, in a sense, to end the narcissisms of our philosophical discourses that have been wholly involved, in one way or another, with continued depictions of "ourselves" and our "values".[9] As Meillassoux puts it, the preeminent post-metaphysical question is "what would the world be like after humanity?"[10] In short, what comes after the subject?

7 It was for just this reason that Foucault originally intended his work to have the title the book would take in English, *The Order of Things*, which in fact only highlights the distance, marked by the mediation of the discursive orders investigated by Foucault, between words and things.

8 *AF*, pp. 42-46.

9 Ibid., p. 27.

10 "Ray Brassier, Iain Hamilton Grant, Graham Harman, Quentin Meillassoux: Speculative Realism," *Collapse* Volume 3 (2007), p. 429, hereafter, *SR*.

Thus we will be led to ask if his work represents the beginnings of a final epistemic shift beyond man and the various figures of subjectivity. It is the task of the present paper to review Meillassoux's "speculative materialism," which positions itself as a theoretical leap beyond the naïve realism that simply asserts our unmediated access to the things themselves, i.e., reality *as it is* independent of its value as a correlate of the subject. To do so, Meillassoux works from *within* the "correlationist circle," taking the premises of correlationism and radicalizing them in order to find a heretofore "hidden passage" to that which is "capable of existing even whether we are or not."[11] But along this passage, the worry is that Meillassoux trails behind him, so to speak, remnants of the dualism he is attempting to leave behind. He would thus seemingly provides a case study in the deconstructive dictum that all moves beyond metaphysics implicitly reinforce its dominant prejudices, in this case, the distinctions between the intelligible and sensible, "intellectual intuition" and the body, and a reified subjectivity and its correlate, an "absolute" in-itself to be figured in terms of "hyper-chaos." This outcome of his speculative work is in part methodological, since his strategy is to show correlationism's self-refutation in order to open it to the outside. It is in this way, though, that he risks building a new house with the old master's tools. The point will be to gauge new directions for a materialism both speculative and non-dualist proffered in Meillassoux's work, one that would destabilize the subject not just in terms of its epistemological finitude, but also in terms of its conceptual locus in the order of things.

The End of Metaphysics and the Beginning of Speculation

Meillassoux's "speculative realism"[12] is dismissive of an entire tradition in post-Kantian French and German phenomenology (Husserl, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, etc.) and post-phenomenology (Lacan, Derrida, Foucault, etc.). These movements, he believes, are implicated in an 'episteme', to use Foucault's terminology, that can only think being as "for us," as in the phenomenal in Kant, intentionality in Husserl, the existential structure of

11 *AF*, p. 28.

12 The term is Ray Brassier's (*Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 31. Henceforth cited as *NU*). For an excellent overview of Meillassoux's work in *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, see *NU*, pp. 43-86.

being-there of Heidegger's Marburg years, or what Meillassoux takes to be the prison house of discursive structures in much French post-structuralism.

> While the 'man of science' has intensified the decentering [of correlationism] due to scientific knowledge by uncovering diachronic occurrences of increasing ancient provenance, 'the man of philosophy' has been narrowing the ambit of the correlation towards an originally finite 'being-in-the-world', or an epoch of Being, or a linguistic community, which is to say, an ever-narrower 'zone', 'terrain', or habitat, but one of which the philosopher remains lord and master by virtue of the alleged singularity of his specific brand of knowledge.[13]

What Meillassoux argues is that contemporary philosophy cannot account for "ancestrality," those events "of increasing ancient provenance" that took place prior to the appearance of human consciousness, and thus could not be "for us" in anything but a strained sense. The Earth was formed some 4.56 billion years ago, terrestrial life appeared on it 3.5 billion years ago, and the conditions for the possibility of correlationism, namely human beings, appeared on the Earth a relatively scant two million years ago. No correlationism, he argues, can take ancestrality literally: these are events that mark an in-itself temporally inaccessible to any consciousness or discursive practice. For Meillassoux, the task is to reinitialize modernity's response to Cartesian "dogmatism" about the reality of events. We must also get away from a philosophical narcissism that presupposes that the philosopher "possesses a specific type of knowledge which imposes a correction upon science's" statements about ancestral events, such as the creation of the universe, by treating them as second order phenomena *a posteriori* to an originary co-relatedness of human beings and things.[14] But Meillassioux is also clear that scientists, for their part, operate from a realist dogmatism that takes for granted that the "arche-fossil," the evidence of ancestral events prior to living beings, points without mediation to the 'in-itself' of reality, a realism that Husserl for his part called the 'natural attitude'. The work of philosophy, on Meillassoux's account, is to remain "capable of being astonished (in the strong sense) by the straightforward literal meaning of the ancestral," an

13 *AF*, p. 121.
14 Ibid., p. 13.

astonishment[15] that leads the speculative philosopher to find a means to "grasp the in-itself."[16]

For Meillassoux, "correlationalism" argues "a world is meaningful only as given to a living (or thinking) being".[17] Whether trapped in language, discourse, or on the transcendental side of the Kantian schematism, the in-itself or the *hors-texte* is unavailable to thought and, as such, meaningless. Human existence is in this way caught within a 'vicious circle' by which anything that can be said about the world *as it is* outside of subjectivity or cultural discourses is said to be conditioned from *within* by a given subjectivity, existential structure, or language game.[18] Though Meillassioux would be skeptical, I would suggest that Heidegger's later thinking of the *es gibt* (the 'there is') of being, Merleau-Ponty's 'flesh of the world', Deleuze's 'immanence', and Derrida's notion of the 'event' are all attempts, successful or not, to break out of this "correlationalism." Yet for Meillassioux statements such as 'the date of the origin of the Earth was 4.56 billion years ago' are still to be prefaced by the caveat of the modern correlationist that such data are filtered through the very form of science's conceptual scheme. "Correlationism," as such, "consists in disqualifying the claim that it is possible to consider the realm of subjectivity and objectivity *independently* of one another".[19]

Husserl's ontology is paradigmatic in that it is based upon a 'life world' (*Lebenswelt*) that is explicitly, as he remarks in his *Paris Lectures*, "for us",[20] but the correlationist could always argue that he or she is interested in the question of meaning for all those who can have intuition,

15 Meillassoux's "astonishment" should not be confused with Aristotelian "*thaumazein*" or the Leibnizian wonder over the originary enigma "why is there something rather than nothing." For Meillassoux, speculative materialism is not a thinking of enchantment, but rather deflationary in "demonstrating that it is absolutely necessary that the in-itself exists," such that this wonder is no longer necessary (*AF*, p. 71).
16 Ibid., p. 27.
17 Ibid., p. 15.
18 Ibid., p. 51.
19 Ibid., p. 5, my emphasis.
20 Edmund Husserl, *The Paris Lectures*, trans. Peter Koestenbaum (New York: Springer Books, 1975), p. 30. For Meillassoux's own discussion of Husserl, see *AF*, pp. 122 and 131, n. 4.

the *cogitamus*, which is not the same as the quest to describe the 'meaningless' (for the correlationist) real except for its importance in thinking of human existence. Before moving further, it would help to map out what Meillassoux takes to be the four major categories of thought in the contemporary period responding to naïve realism.

1) Weak correlationism: Kant is the paradigmatic case here, since he proscribes any knowledge of the in-itself: categories of the understanding cannot be applied beyond intuition in his transcendental philosophy.[21] However, we can *think* the noumenal in that we can know *a priori* that the in-itself not only exists but is non-contradictory. Importantly, there is no sufficient reason for the correlation itself, since one cannot explain *a priori* why the relation itself exists, let alone in any particular way (with space and time as the only forms of intuition). In order to do so, one would have to overstep the bounds of understanding into the noumenal. As such, the correlation is contingent, an ineluctable but nevertheless non-deducible fact of human existence.

2) Strong correlationism: Here Meillassoux identifies Heidegger and Wittgenstein, though we could add social constructivists of most varieties. As Meillassoux's describes it, they argue that we are so trapped on this side of the correlation that cannot even *think* the noumenal; all we ever have is the pure givenness of the phenomenal, or, for the social constructivists, linguistic structures.[22] This view is, for Meillassioux, the "catastrophe" left in Kant's wake.[23] The in-itself is left to magical thinkers and their fantasies of a great puppeteer or ventriloquist beneath the phenomenal marionettes of appearances.[24] One need only peak through the literature of the so-called religious turn in contemporary continental philosophy to gauge how far strong correlationism may have

21 Let us recall Kant's well-known principle of his work: "I call transcendental all apprehension [*Erkenntnis*] that is concerned not with objects [*Gegenständen*] but rather with our method of apprehending objects in general [*sondern mit unserer Erkenntnisart von Gegenständen*], insofar as this apprehension of objects is to be possible a priori. A system of such concepts would thus be called transcendental philosophy" (*Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, B 25).

22 *AF*, p. 43.

23 Ibid., p. 124

24 Ibid., p. 125.

ceded the field to the type of thinking found in John Caputo's "weak theology"[25] and, more perniciously, to fundamentalists whose goals are less theological than theocratic. Here, as with weak correlationism, the correlation is taken to be contingent, since there is no *a priori* ground (nature or another ontotheological entity) for the relation of beings to being.

3) Speculative Idealism: Hegel is Meillassoux's example here, though Marx would suffice as well. Hegel's critique of Kant's weak correlationism is well-known, arguing that Kant cannot *know* the boundary between the phenomenal and the noumenal without contradicting the transcendental enterprise. In the Hegelian structure of the co-implication of thinking and being one would be right to note how little Marx turned Hegel on his head, given that Hegel already marks the 'ideal' as real in and through the movement of the in-itself. This idealism is 'speculative' in that it advances into the in-itself, but it remains metaphysical in that it positions an absolute that is necessary (the correlation itself between thinking and being). The correlation itself is taken as the absolute *in-itself*. It is against this 'infinite' dialectical movement of the absolute that the modesty of the strong correlationist appears salutary. Rather than positing, as Meillassoux describes, an infinite and necessary being, the strong correlationist rejects dogmatic metaphysics while emphasizing human finitude and its inherent inability to think various grounds for being, whether it be the Hegelian spirit, Leibniz's monad of monads, or other necessary entities of onto-theology.

25 Caputo is a case in point, having started his better known work with *Radical Hermeneutics* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988), then moved on to *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida* (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997), then finally to a full-grown fideism in *What Would Jesus Deconstruct?: The Good News of Postmodernism for the Church* (New York: Baker Academic, 2007). As I'll note below, the thinkers of finitude cannot be held accountable for those who would take, for example, an atheist Jew, and read them into a resurrectionist theology of the event. For a decisive critique of these accounts of deconstruction, see Martin Hägglung, *Radical Atheism: Derrida and the Time of Life* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), especially pp. 116-127.

4) Speculative materialism: Here is the place Meillassoux marks out for himself. As we will see, speculative materialism leaves aside the principle of sufficient reason, integral to the Hegelian system as well as all manner of philosophical determinisms, and argues that by working out from the very principles of the correlationist, one can think certain facts about the noumenal and access the "great outside" in a way that is not mediated by the conditions for that access. Rather than necessary, the correlation is *contingent*, and thus cannot sustain a dialectical system of the Hegelian type. It is Meillassoux's materialism that turns Hegel on his head, taking its distance from the principle of sufficient reason and offering an argument that the in-itself is non-contradictory.

It may seem odd at first, then, that Meillassoux's main target in *After Finitude* and elsewhere is correlationism. But Meillassoux argues that the continued forbearance of contemporary philosophy with regard to an unknowable "in-itself" is ultimately "connected to the immunity from the constraints of conceptual rationality which religious belief currently seems to enjoy."[26] By giving up on an absolute, strong correlationism enforces a dangerous agnosticism by which "it is considered conceptually illegitimate to undertake… a refutation of religious belief".[27] In this way, "by forbidding reason any claim to the absolute, the end of metaphysics has taken the form of an exacerbated return of the religious".[28] Graham Harman makes a similar point: "Strong correlationism's apparent modesty toward the absolute has in fact opened the gates to every possible form of arbitrary belief."[29] Harman notes that this supposed "modesty" about the in-itself—a modesty inversely proportionate to contemporary philosophy's deflationary tactics against science and ordinary understanding—has meant we are "left with nothing but meager critiques of fanaticism in purely moral terms".[30] Though sympathetic, I think the problem is the inverse of what Meillassoux posits. The problem is not that latter-day correlationists make their objections known only at the level of "political/moral critique" in the face of "an elect few" who

26 *AF*, p. 43
27 Ibid., p. 44.
28 Ibid., p. 45.
29 Graham Harman, "Quentin Meillassoux: A New French Philosopher," *Philosophy Today*, March 2007, pp. 104-117, p. 108. Henceforth cited as *QM*.
30 *QM*, p. 115; *AF*, p. 47.

"carry out the worst violence".[31] Instead, it has been a political and moral quietude that has left many strong correlationists tolerant—if patronizingly so—of religious beliefs that run counter to their ontological commitments, which include *knowing* that there are *no* absolutes, whether offered through belief or not. The correlationists—and it's important to recall that Husserl, Heidegger, et al., on Meillassoux's reading *deny* that there is *anything* beyond the phenomenal—may be wrong on many accounts, but 'modesty' in this and many other regards is not one of them. The correlationist, if he or she says anything, is attuned to the finite in the strict sense of saying to the believer what *cannot* be said about the *an-sich*. That is to say, the correlationist shows the fideist's dogmatism to be a 'projection' onto the 'in-itself', a projection perhaps worthy of analytic investigation, from Freud to Lacan and beyond, in terms of the scope and power of these fantasies, but not as a compliment to their work. Let's recall that theology and the philosophy of religion have left aside, because of the dead-end reached by their dogmatic claims, 'verificationism', 'falsifiability', and *scientia* in the old sense over the last fifty years for a renewed theism, which makes claims for a heaven, a loving God, and even a deconstructing Jesus[32] that are, to the correlationist *and* the speculative philosopher, made without any pretense to reason or even a "faith within the limits of reason alone." Thus I don't want to give into the suggestion in Meillassoux's work that religious fantasists are adhering in part to a wrong-headed philosophy of finitude, whatever its particular shape. There are indeed religious readers of Heidegger, Sartre, Derrida, and Foucault, and alas, their prominence in the academy is not minimal, but my claim is that the thinkers of finitude have philosophies that are systematically inimical to religious claims, whatever practitioners of bad faith in both meanings of the term have to say.[33] Is Nietzsche's death of God a call for the renewal of faith? Is Heidegger's critique of onto-theology a license for theological hermeneutics? Is *différance* another name for God? Going further—and

31 *AF*, p. 47.
32 See footnote 11. I owe this part of the discussion on contemporary "philosophy of religion" to my colleague Brian Clack.
33 Dominique Janicaud's *Phenomenology and the Theological Turn* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997) remains a classic and philosophically rich polemic in this regard.

one can gape for quite a time at the connections between each word in this phrase—is Badiou a "hidden theologian of the void"?[34]

These points are important, since my claim will ultimately be that Meillassoux himself never quite escapes the correlationist circle, though his work is an advance in formulating the *aporia* before us. Despite Meillassoux's distinction between "weak correlationism," which for him can *think* the *an-sich* without knowing it, and "strong correlationism," which asserts we can't even *think* the *an-sich*, it's not a problem from *within* even the strongest correlationism to account for what Meillassoux dubs the arche-fossil: the givenness of such data can be very much the (anterior) background, say, for the lifeworld and contemporary experience, and this givenness is not dependent on human consciousness or intersubjective community (thus, the very receptivity or passivity of givenness). Indeed, the arche-fossil need not even be temporally anterior, but could be any event or thing not accessible to human beings, either because spatially it is a galaxy too distant for empirical research or it is too small for perceptual awareness, or because temporally it is an entity still to be discovered; the mathematically deducible "ancestral" event is but a radicalized version of arguments used by rationalists against empiricists for centuries.

The upshot of Meillassoux's work on the ancestral is that it marks a being that *is not present* to any subject. Meillassoux's work, in this way, follows on post-Heideggerian critiques of the metaphysics of presence: "the exteriority [correlationists] elaborate is essentially relative: relative to a consciousness, a language, a Dasein, etc. No object, no being, no event, or law which is not always-already correlated to a point of view, to a subjective access – this is the thesis of any correlationism".[35] To make his claim, Meillassoux needs to depict the correlationist as conflating epistemological givenness and the ontological dependence of real entities on thought. But, for example, I recognize that my radio constitutes the sound waves it brings in through a century's old mechanism, but this doesn't mean that I think that the sound waves weren't in the air before the radio was turned on, nor that the actual people whose voices are

34 Kenneth A. Reynhout, "Alain Badiou: Hidden Theologian of the Void?" *The Heythrop Journal*, July 2008, pp. 140-162. Reynhout's answer to this title question is, ultimately, yes, even if one is left to wonder what a theology of a void, let alone a "hidden" one, would be.

35 *SR*, p. 409.

transmitted are relying on my radio's battery power for continued existence.

The task of his speculative realism is not in the end, I would argue, to replace correlationism, which can continue apace with its phenomenologies of the given as long as these are limited in their descriptions to phenomena as given. It's true that Meillassoux speaks of "refuting" correlationism but this "refutation" is limited to correlationism's arguments against realism. He notes, "I can access a speculative realism which clearly refutes, *but no longer disqualifies*, correlationism".[36] Meillassoux is uninterested in demonstrating the failings of correlationism with regard to its *descriptions* of that which is *given* to thought. In fact, the method of his speculative materialism is to *absolutize* the correlationist relation, not *undo* it, in order to work from within the correlationist circle to find a minimal pivot point from which to begin anew the speculative project, which seeks "a non-metaphysical absolute".[37]

Toward the Absolutely Unreasonable

This pivot point is the facticity of the correlation itself, which is necessarily posited by the correlationist in order to avoid both idealism and naïve realism. Let's quickly follow Meillassoux on the "narrow path" out of the correlationist circle. For Meillassoux, one must admit the "absolute contingency of the given in general" in order to postulate any correlationism, since it would otherwise fall into idealism's positing of a necessary relation between thinking and being.[38] Meillassoux notes that the correlationist cannot, however, account for this contingency since contingency can be known, whereas facticity (the systematic contingency of all relations) is unknowable from within the relation, according to correlation's own description. We can know objects are contingent as they are experienced, that is, as they are given within a co-relation: objects come and go and their being is non-necessary. But to assert the facticity of contingency itself, the correlationist must know something that it cannot, by its own lights, know. Thus, as Ray Brassier nicely summarizes it, correlationism:

36 Ibid,, p. 432, my emphasis.

37 *AF*, p. 52.

38 Ibid., p. 54.

> finds itself confronted with the following dilemma: it cannot de-absolutize facticity without absolutizing the correlation [the idealist move]; yet is cannot de-absolutize the correlation without absolutizing facticity [the speculative materialist move]. But to absolutize facticity is to assert the unconditional necessity of its contingency.[39]

Hence, correlationism must assert *positively* one unconditional, that is, absolute fact or condition: the facticity of contingency, and in particular, the contingency of the relation. Meillassoux presents this from a few angles, one of which we can call the argument from death, which takes up human being's "most remarkable power—its capacity to access the possibility of its own non-being, and thus to know itself to be mortal".[40] He notes that the correlationist, as agnostic (of the in-itself), must assert that "we can *think* ourselves as no longer being," and, as such, this "capacity-to-be-other cannot be conceived as a correlate of our thinking, precisely because it harbors the possibility of our own non-being".[41] Thinking the possibility of our impossibility, as Heidegger called death, then carries with it the seeds of the destruction of correlationism. In order to think oneself as mortal, one must consider one's death as not depending on a relation to one's thought. The correlationist cannot maintain a necessity to the correlation itself without defending idealism: if the relation was necessary, there would be no death, since one would always have to be *in relation to death* in order to actually die, which cannot be the case if one is *not*.[42] Or, as Epicurus put it long ago in his

39 *NU*, p. 66-7.

40 *AF*, p. 59.

41 Ibid., p. 57.

42 There is not space here to cover Meillassoux's depiction of the *synchrony* of this relation, which Heidegger among the correlationists, explicitly denies. As is well known, Heidegger's analysis of Dasein's being-towards-death (*Sein-zum-Tode*) is founded on the distinction between two categories of certainty. First there is the "certainty" of death as empirical or what he calls "factual" (*Tatsächlich*), which Dasein, as fallen (*Verfallen*), always displaces in its everydayness as a non-possibility since it is correlationally "not-yet" (*Sein und Zeit, Gesamtausgabe II, ed. F.-W. von Herrmann, 1977*, 87; 174; henceforth cited as *SZ*). But, on the other hand, there is the *certain* facticity (*Faktizität*) of one's comportments to what is factual, in this example, one's comportment towards death. As this facticity marks the *relation* of Dasein to death, Meillassoux would be correct in emphasizing the

letter to Meneoceus, "So long as we exist, death is not with us; but when death comes, then we do not exist."[43]

The difference between Meillassoux and the correlationist regarding the in-itself may appear in the end minor, but it is crucial. The correlationist argues, as Meillassoux depicts it, that the in-itself exists but one can only know that we have no knowledge of it. For his part, Meillassoux "maintain[s] that the in-itself could actually be anything whatsoever and that *we know this*".[44] Speculative realism is thus founded on the principle that the in-itself has an *independent* existence and our knowledge of it extends to the necessity of its contingency. It only remains to be shown how it is "that the in-itself could actually be

correlationist circle. But, for Heidegger, facticity itself is *not* factical, which Meillassoux himself makes the starting point for his own speculative materialism: the one necessity is the facticity of contingency (*AF*, 59-60). Going further, the relation to one's ownmost death is not correlational in Heidegger since "death gives Dasein nothing to be actualized" (*SZ*, 262). Death, then, for Dasein, is the "non-relational possibility" of existing (*SZ*, 255). Nevertheless, Heidegger remains faithful to the Kantian and correlationist tradition, at least in his Marburg years, by reinscribing Kantian constitution, to oversimplify, as an existential analytic of care in which Dasein's relation to the world, mediated by its understanding (*Verstehen*), is fully temporal (*Zeitlichkeit*). Being as temporality (*Temporalität*) in this period remains ever horizonal, and Heidegger remains bereft in moving from the ontico-ontological, relational constitution of Dasein to being as such, given his focus on the being of Dasein: *Temporalität*, he writes, "means temporality insofar as temporality itself is made into a *theme* as the condition of the possibility of the understanding of being and of ontology as such. The term "'Temporality' [*Temporalität*] is intended to indicate that temporality, in the existential analytic, represents the horizon *from which we understand being*" (*Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (Indianapolis, Indiana: 1996), p. 223, emphasis mine). The horizon, then, remains the *"from which"* of Dasein's understanding of its own existence. The move in his later work from *Verstehen* to *Denken* (thinking) as originally poetic attempts a puncturing of this impasse of the correlationism, which he describes as the co-originality of Dasein and Being. It is here that the crucial decision for any future non-metaphysics can be formulated: either from the later poetics of Heidegger and the event (*Ereignis*) that opens onto the outside of linguistic structures, or, as we'll describe below, the "intellectual intuition" of *mathesis* as access to the Being of beings as approached by Meillassoux.

43 Epicurus, *Epicurus: Selected Writings*, trans. C. Bailey (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1951), p. 113.

44 *AF*, p. 65, my emphasis.

anything whatsoever and that *we know this.*" First, the contingency of the relation, as absolute, is no longer "for us," and thus, Meillassoux claims, "it is through facticity *alone* that we are able to make our way towards the absolute".[45] One might ask how this absolute can be such without returning us to metaphysics. Here, we begin to understand the true import of his work: unlike Hegel, who founded his idealism on the necessity of the correlation, and unlike correlationism, which founded itself on the contingency of the correlation, speculative materialism is founded on the necessity of contingency. This *positive* knowledge, this *fact* that there is contingency, is at once minimal and breath-taking: we know that everything can be otherwise, which he dubs with the French neologism *factualité*, the non-facticity of facticity.[46] This absolute is not a *thing*, which would be the God of onto-theology, a necessary object from which all else derives its being. Rather, the only "eternal principle" is the necessity of contingency.[47] Three consequences: (1) there is no necessary being (here, we have, in sum, a proof for the inexistence of any God); (2) the in-itself is freed, because of its eternal contingency, of the principle of sufficient reason, since no cause can be said to have a particular effect; (3) the in-itself, as Kant argued, is non-contradictory, since any entity that is already otherwise would always be what it is, and thus non-contingent.[48] The rejection of Leibniz's theorem that *nihil est sine ratione*, which has for centuries provided the grounds for thinking both causality and the divine *causa sui*, is the "astonishing" outcome of Meillassoux's work. "There is," he writes, "no reason for anything to be or to remain thus and so rather than otherwise, and this applies as much to the laws that govern the world as to the things of the world".[49] This, he says, is "a reason emancipated from the principle of reason".[50]

What we have, then, is a "hyper-chaos." As Meillassoux points out, without the principle of sufficient reason, not just every *thing* is contingent, but so is every law. We must recall that *factualité* stipulates that every intra-worldly law is itself contingent and thus possible of being

45 Ibid., p. 63.

46 Ray Brassier translates this as *factiality* (*AF*, p. 132, fn. 4), as its adjectival form *factial* does not have the normal english connotations of *factual*. I will follow this convention.

47 Ibid., p. 65.

48 Ibid., pp. 67-68.

49 Ibid., p. 53.

50 Ibid., p. 77

otherwise. For those looking to Meillassoux's return to rationalism as a means for eternally grounding the laws obtained in scientific analysis, Meillassoux's rational principle of "unreason" will surely disappoint. A modern day Voltaire, Meillassoux is not content to mock the pretensions of Leibniz's assumptions about the best of all possible worlds, but to detach all thinking aligned to the principle of sufficient reason. Cause and effect, indeed every axiom derived from the principle of sufficient reason, is itself contingent within a factial universe. Radicalizing Hume, Meillassoux argues that given this speculative absolute, it is not just that chance is involved in each roll of the die. The die itself, given the "eternal and lawless possible becoming of every law",[51] is open to mutability between each toss. Taking this example, Meillassoux argues that we rightly suspect that it would be infinitely improbable that a pair of die would continuously come up with a pair of deuces, just as we continually deduce that it would be infinitely improbable that the laws of our universe come out the way they do without some prior cause.[52] But this model is all wrong, since it would lead us to assume that the universe is a "whole" composed of possible laws that would be constantly changing, and thus it would be nearly impossible and thus unthinkable that our laws keep turning out the way they do each time they are measured. Hence, we assume that the stable laws we experience provide ample evidence for necessary laws governing the universe. "This probabilistic reasoning," Meillassoux points out, "is only valid on condition that what is *a priori* possible be thinkable in terms of numerical totality."[53] It is here that we move from the logical absolute of the principle of un-reason to a mathematically inflected absolute, which takes up the Zermelo-Cantorian axiomatic of set theory. What Meillassoux must explain is not why there is something rather than nothing, but rather why what there is appears stable and amenable to physical laws from one moment to the next. (Without this stability, Meillassoux's can have no recourse to the ancestral, since one could posit a physical relativism that makes any stipulation of such facts the hostage of ever-changing laws.) Meillassoux warns us not to use aleatory reasoning to explain away this stability and, by extension, the hyper-chaos of the in-itself he describes. Given how fantastical the odds would be, how is it that this universe is stable over time? Meillassoux points out that contingency is not chance, since the

51 Ibid., p. 64.

52 Ibid., p. 97.

53 Ibid., p. 101.

latter depends on two assumptions called into question by Cantorian set theory: (1) one can logically totalize all the possible outcomes of the universe, in which case the likelihood of a stable universe would be so low as to be all but impossible; (2) one can talk about probability not only within the world, but also about the world itself, as one does when discusses the chances of this world being stable. These both mark what Meillassoux dubs the "frequentialist implication".[54] In order to make any critique of Meillassoux by pointing out the unlikelihood of the apparent universe, we would need to be able to calculate a set of all possible worlds, and then determine based upon that figure the chances of constancy among them. From there, we could deduce the probability of our own stable world. First, however, chance itself would put order over this hyper-chaos, giving this chaotic in-itself a boundary of given possibilities; the chaos Meillassoux is discussing is one of *unbounded* possibilities. Or, to put it another way, the idea of chance, which is being used to prove inductively the necessity of physical laws, depends itself on a set of physical laws.[55] Secondly, Meillassoux echoes Heidegger's call to move beyond "calculatory reason," since in "factial ontology" no such calculations of possibilities can be made, though he critiques Heideggerian thinking and its assumption of a higher realm of thought overlooking mathematics. For Cantor, there can be no totalization of the possible, since the transfinite stipulates that the "*(qualifiable) totality of the thinkable is unthinkable*".[56] In the end, "what the set-theoretical axiomatic demonstrates is at the very least a fundamental uncertainty regarding the totalizability of the possible," and thus "we should restrict the claims of aleatory reasoning solely to objects of experience" and "to the very laws of our universe, as if we knew that the latter necessarily belongs to some greater Whole".[57] Thus, we can "detotalize the possible" and still think the "stability of the laws," which is in contrast to those pressing the position that the physical laws are necessary, who are unable to show why "these laws are necessary *and* why it is these laws, rather than others, that exist".[58] In the end, Einstein was right that God does not play dice with the universe, but for the wrong reasons: there is no God (that is, necessary being) and the universe is *not* on the model of a pair of

54 Ibid., p. 98.
55 Ibid., p. 99.
56 Ibid., p. 104.
57 Ibid., p. 104.
58 Ibid., p. 107.

dice with a finite set of outcomes. We must be prepared to think after finitude.

After Finitude: Whither Materialism?

Meillassoux's investigations into the reality of the *in-itself* works methodically from *within* the Kantian split between the noumenal and phenomenal to *le grand dehors*. One can take this to be merely a strategy in *After Finitude* to strip correlationism of its agnosticism about reality and to take on directly the dominant attribute of contemporary philosophy. Nevertheless, while correlationism *assumes* the fact of contingency, it is also the case that Meillassoux's realism *speculates* from the fact—contingent and necessary, yes—of the phenomenal-noumenal split. Again, to repeat from above, he argues, "I can access a speculative realism which clearly refutes, *but no longer disqualifies*, correlationism".[59] The difference is subtle, but important. Meillassoux has set up a correlationism that accepts *at each moment* a synchronicity between its thinking and the giveneness of the being before it. For his part, Meillassoux argues that the very meaning of the ancestral is derived from a "diachronic" "temporal hiatus between the world and the relation-to-the-world".[60] He thus stipulates an abyss of difference between our experience of the world—describable, as he notes, by aleatory reasoning[61] —and the world in-itself, which is non-totalizable and amenable to mathematical description. Here, Meillassoux sets up an opposition between the time of experience, of the phenomenal, and the "exhaustively" mathematizable *an-sich* "subsisting without any of those aspects that constitute its concreteness *for us*".[62] This mathematizable world, for Meillassoux, is thinkable in terms of what Locke called primary qualities, as opposed to secondary qualities "such as flavor, smell, heat, etc.".[63] The former, taking the measure of the anscestral, is "separable from man," while the latter is phenomenal and not. This is the true import of the Cartesian revolution, one eclipsed by Kant's counter-revolution:

59 *SR*, p. 432, my emphasis.
60 *AF*, p. 112.
61 Ibid., p. 105.
62 Ibid., p. 115, my emphasis.
63 Ibid.

> The mathematizable no longer designates an aspect of the world that is essentially *immerged* within the non-mathematizable (i.e. a surface or trajectory, which is merely the surface or trajectory of a moving body), it now indicates a world capable of autonomy—a world wherein bodies as well as their movements can be described independently of their sensible qualities. ...The world of Cartesian extension is a world that acquires *the independence of a substance*.[64]

Of course, in this way, Meillassoux merely reaffirms philosophically what has been notable for centuries, namely the difference between how we experience the world and how it is described mathematically and scientifically. The work of physics has shifted us far aground of the Cartesian and Newtonian notions of "absolute space," whether through relativity theory, quantum mechanics, or string theory, and each progressive step in scientific theory leaves it less open to descriptions analogous to our experience. (No one can build a model of the dimensions of string theory, for example.) But whereas the philosophers of finitude were attempting to upend previous incarnations of the subject, Meillassoux's work reifies it: "We acknowledge the sensible only exists as a subject's relation to the world; but on the other hand, we maintain that the mathematizable properties of the object are exempt from the constraint of such a relation."[65] At times, there is little doubt that Meillassoux is decentering thought, giving tantalizing descriptions not to the given but to what he calls the "universalizable given," that is, a thinking of the in-itself dislocated from any locus and thus universalizably available.[66] Speculative realism is founded on the principle that the in-itself has an *independent* existence and our knowledge of it extends to the necessity of its contingency, that is, that it *may or may not be*. We can't say *what it is*, what is "universally given," but only hypothetically *what it would be* given contingent laws. Meillassoux notes accordingly, "What is strange in my philosophy is that

64 Ibid., my emphasis.

65 Ibid., p. 3.

66 Ibid., p. 15. With this notion of the "universally given," Meillassoux comes closest to what Graham Harman describes in his "object-oriented" philosophy: "a universally given" would be a de-localized givenness "withdraw[n] from all perceptual and causal relations" (*Guerilla Metaphysics: Phenomenology and the Carprentry of Things* (Chicago, Il: Open Court Press, 2005), p. 20).

it's an ontology that never speaks about *what is* but only about *what can be*. Never about what there is, because this I have no right to speak about".[67]

What is also strange in his philosophy is a proposed "materialism," however speculative, that reinforces the "abyssal divide between what exists and what appears".[68] Meillassoux argues there is an "invisible reality of things" that is only approachable through "intellectual" or "dianoetic" "intuition".[69] Following all the above, we can stipulate an (1) ontology of "what can be," which he specifically differentiates from previous ontologies as "factial ontology"; (2) an epistemology that can think "what is," namely the work of mathematics as applied to the stable set of laws now adhering *within* the universe, and can think "what is whether we are or not"; and (3) an intuition turned back upon *itself*, since it must think its own connection to both "what can be" and "what is": "we must project unreason into the things themselves and grasp of facticity the veritable *intellectual intuition* of the absolute".[70]

This intuition, akin to Aristotelian *nous*, sees the unseen "principle of unreason" by way of ontological *demonstrations*, as opposed to the "ontic" *descriptions* of things and physical laws as they are.[71] Meillassoux contends to have pierced the veil of the phenomenal to a *necessary* and *eternal* condition of the *an-sich*, that is, the "radical" and unassimilable "exteriority" of the real as through and through *sine ratione* and *sine causa*. In pronouncing this principle of unreason, Meillassioux repeats Aristotle's "an-hypothetical" method, providing a non-deductable and eternal first principle "by which anyone contesting it must presuppose it to be true".[72] Importantly, it is also Aristotle who makes the crucial distinction between that which is knowable "'relative to us' and 'knowable' without qualification" (*ou gar tauta hemin te gnorima kai haplos*).[73] The Aristotelian *theoretical*, that is to say, *speculative* (*theoreia*) question is to find the *method* (*methodos*) or "path" to the *archê* of being qua being. Meillassoux's work, similarly, sets out the

67 *SR*, p. 419, my emphases.

68 *AF*, p. 18.

69 *SR*, p. 414.

70 *AF*, p. 82.

71 Ibid., p. 127.

72 Ibid., p. 61.

73 *Physics* I, 1, 184a10–18.

moves from "intellectual intuition"[74] to an *archê* (principle) of originary unreason, which he calls "absolute possibility," an intuition faithful to the Aristotelian method, if not his metaphysical edifice of the first cause, which for Aristotle was absolute actuality.[75]

In moving forward with this "an-archic" speculative project, Meillassoux stipulates *at least two* temporalities:

(1) The "absolute time" of factiality: the eternity of "hyper-chaos" is the time of "*pure possibility*," which he calls "not just a time whose capacity for destroying everything is a function of laws, but a time which is capable of *lawless destruction of every law.*" This is a time "capable of destroy[ing] every determinate reality" and can be "thought as absolute," and as an "eternal in-itself" that is "non-iterable".[76] Given that it is an ever transcendent "time" of "pure possibility," Meillassoux describes it as "an ontology that never speaks about *what is*," that is, the actual.[77] This "chaos" is a "super-immensity" that is incalculable and the "*only* in-itself".[78]

(2) The temporality of the ancestral: the time of the "mathematizable"[79] *a posteriori* to the temporality of the "logical" absolute time of *factiality*, but logically *a priori* to any given-ness to human being.[80] This temporality measures the "precariousness" of "empirical contingency" and all actual "non given occurrence[s]".[81] This would be the "in-itself

74 *AF*, p. 82.

75 Interestingly, Heidegger traces back the principle of sufficient reason in the essay "*Vom Wesen des Grundes*" (1929) and in the lecture course *Der Satz vom Grund* (1955–56) to Aristotelian metaphysics. For Heidegger, Aristotle's four "causes" (*aitiai*) are best understood as Dasein's stance towards particular beings. But Heidegger also points out that Kant's "transcendental philosophy" owes much to Aristotle's *Physics*, in which there is a stepping over or back from the everyday to its *a priori* principles (*archai*): "When the objects of an inquiry, in any department, have principles [*archai*], conditions [*aitia*], or elements [*stoicheia*], *it is through acquaintance with these* that knowledge, that is to say scientific knowledge, is attained" (*Physics* 1, 1, 182a5-10).

76 *AF*, pp. 62, 63 and 79.

77 *SR*, p. 419.

78 *AF*, p. 111, my emphasis.

79 Ibid., p. 117.

80 Ibid., p. 116.

81 Ibid., p. 62.

that is Cartesian." Now, given that Meillassoux has argued that the "*only* in-itself" is that of "chaos," what can we make of his claim that the "world's being-thus-and-so can only be discovered by way of experience"?[82] The task of speculative materialism is to "reabsolutize" the mathematical, just "as we absolutized the logical by grasping in the fundamental criterion for every mathematical statement a necessary condition for the contingency of every entity".[83] Meillassoux argues that the in-itself, including the mathematical, is simply heterogeneous to experience, since "every mathematical statement describes an entity which is essentially contingent…yet capable of existing in a world devoid of humanity … [T]his is an absolutization that could be called ontical," as opposed to the Cantorian transfinite that is "ontological" and "states something about the structure of the possible as such".[84] But given that the entities under description are neither transcendent nor "ontological" but "ontic," this would be a set of laws that are *themselves contingent*. This is the paradox that Meillassoux's use of set theory leaves us: either the *laws of mathematics* are absolute, in which case they are intuitable (in the "luminous clarity of intellection"[85]) from set theory and thus not descriptive of the laws that are at the mercy of "hyper-chaos," *or* these laws are at the mercy of a hyper-chaos and thus have a time that is neither experiential (since these *laws* are non-phenomenal but thinkable) nor ontological (since these laws are not *factial*). Thus we are left with two types of statements derivable from "intellectual intuition": (a) statements about the *ontological* conditions for any ontic laws for a "determinate reality." (b) The statements whose referents are the ontic laws of the "determinate" realities. These laws are mutable and thus non-eternal. It would be too much to describe them as having a historicity, since these ontic laws are at the mercy of a chaos that can destroy all, including the time of historicity. (We would thus need to think something like a syncopation *between* and *among* different sets of laws, without thinking of this syncopation as occurring across a line of time, as in a sheet of music with different time signatures, since chaos explodes the possibilities of such conceptualizations.)

82 Ibid., p. 125.

83 Ibid., p. 126.

84 Ibid., p. 127.

85 Ibid., p. 91.

Lastly, there is the time of the intuitive *relation*. I use this word tentatively, since it's unclear in Meillassoux how to think the *link* between reason (as *nous* "accessing"[86] the speculative first principle indexed to a time beyond time, *and* as *mathesis* accessing contingent, if stable, laws of nature) and matter. This is not a connection that is, on his account, representational or phenomenological. But nevertheless, Meillassoux is clear that its temporality is heterogeneous to the 'in-itself': "[O]ur claim is that it is possible to sincerely maintain that objects *could actually and for no reason* whatsoever behave in the most erratic fashion, without having to modify our *usual relation* to things."[87] This is not to be confused with the time of consciousness or experiential time, though Meillassoux does discuss the abyssal divide between the phenemonal and the noumenal. More pertinently, how does one speak of the 'dia-chrony' of a *mathesis* between its 'thought' (e.g., the thought 'the Earth is such and such years old') and its 'object' (the 'ancestral' Earth as it was such and such years ago), or between reasoning and its eternal object (the principle of unreason) without stipulating a *third* temporality? Surely, this "relation" marked by the "luminous clarity of intellection"[88] is contingent, for there is nothing more "precarious" than thought (more and more each day, we can suppose). Indeed, this is the time in which we would be awoken from our correlational slumber,[89] and would seem to be a time of historicity.

The above discussion opens us onto a division of labor that a speculative materialism should close, namely the difference between phenomenologies of the given, or ontologies of language, and those objects that are non-given. In other words, it would appear that Meillassoux has, by dividing experience so sharply from the in-itself, left us a subjectivity in which, as he puts it, "objects *could actually and for no reason* whatsoever behave in the most erratic fashion, without having to modify our *usual relation* to things".[90] A "usual relation to things," which is unmodified by the change in objects, presents us with a strange corollary of any materialism, and suggests an "in-itself" that refers *only to itself*, which is but the inverse of the strong correlationisms that

86 Ibid., p. 82.
87 Ibid., p. 85, my emphasis.
88 Ibid., p. 91.
89 Ibid., p. 128.
90 Ibid., p. 85, my emphasis.

eschewed any statements about the *an-sich*. Speculative materialism must not just work out a "mathematizable science" that is "able to deploy a world that is separable from man." It must not only "legitimate the absolute bearing of the mathematic—rather than the merely logical." It must derive a "precipitate" of the "chaotic virtual" and its "lawless powers" that accounts the points of contact between thought and its object.[91] Having set out to show thought to be superfluous to being, Meillassoux's speculative materialism leaves untouched what he calls thought's ability to "touch" being, or to be touched by it, since it will always circle around a principle of factiality, the unmoved mover of the contingent, the precarious, and the phenomenal.

After the death of God, we have witnessed the possibility of the death of man in all its guises, not least, though, in the fact (stable enough for now) that the sun described by Stevens will cease its existence in some five billions years, give or take a few, taking with it, if human being had not already given up the being-there of its existence, the Earth and its remaining inhabitants. Thus not just each Dasein, but the whole Husserlian life-world has a being-towards-death that will not be there to take the sense of the world at that last of all catastrophes, the catastrophe that will take with it thought and its phenomenal correlates. This is but another way of saying that the phenomenal is finite and the noumenal will remain there, witnessing from the desolation of its chaos the loss of all meaning that can be given to and received from it. This is our ancestral future. We find here, thinking about the before and after of man, about ancestrality and the possibility of our collective impossibility, the figuring of a speculative materialism that cannot "disqualify" correlationism as it attempts to think when all thought will end. In the *Meno*, Plato first stipulated the non-correlation of mathematics—existing before embodiment and ever after—in the sandy ground of Athens. Now, depicting the end of man and what comes after the subject, Meillassoux presents us with only one fact left: the disappearance of all figures in the sand as the waves of chaos wash ashore.

91 Ibid., p. 108.

Pli 20 (2009), 80-110

Between Emancipation and Domination:

Habermasian Reflections on the Empowerment and Disempowerment of the Human Subject

SIMON SUSEN

Introduction

The central objective of Habermas's 'linguistic turn' is to provide a normative foundation for critical theory.[1] The main reason for this

1 See, for example, J. Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action. Volume 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, trans. T. McCarthy (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987 [1981]), hereafter *TCA I*, pp. xli and xliv. See also J. Habermas, *On the Pragmatics of Social Interaction: Preliminary Studies in the Theory of Communicative Action*, trans. B. Fultner (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001 [1984]), pp. 36 and 102-103.

Habermas's aim to provide normative foundations for critical theory has been thoroughly discussed in the secondary literature. See, for example: R. J. Antonio, 'The Normative Foundations of Emancipatory Theory: Evolutionary versus Pragmatic Perspectives', *American Journal of Sociology* 94(4), (1989), pp. 721-748, here pp. 722 and 726-730; J. Bengoa Ruiz de Azúa, *De Heidegger a Habermas. Hermenéutica y fundamentación última en la filosofía contemporánea*, 2a edición (Barcelona: Herder, 2002 [1992]), pp. 127-128; C. Bouchindhomme, 'La théorie critique : théorie ? critique ?', in C. Bouchindhomme and R. Rochlitz, eds., *Habermas, la raison, la critique* (Paris: Cerf, 1996), pp. 139-151, here p. 149; M. Cooke, 'Avoiding Authoritarianism: On the Problem of Justification in Contemporary Critical Social Theory', *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 13(3), (2005), pp. 379-404, here pp. 392 and 398; T. Couture 'Habermas, Values, and the Rational, Internal Structure of Communication', *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 27(3-4), (1993), pp. 403-416, here pp. 404-405; A. Créau,

undertaking is the conviction that any social theory that claims to be committed to the emancipation of the human condition needs to demonstrate on what grounds both its critique of social domination and its pursuit of social liberation can be justified. Just as Habermas's belief in the necessity and possibility of human emancipation is epitomised in the concept of the 'ideal speech situation'[2], his acknowledgment of human domination cannot be dissociated from the concept of

Kommunikative Vernunft als "entmystifiziertes Schicksal" (Frankfurt am Main: Anton Hain, 1991), pp. 31, 136-137, and 149; W. Detel, 'System und Lebenswelt bei Habermas', in S. Müller-Doohm, ed., *Das Interesse der Vernunft: Rückblicke auf das Werk von Jürgen Habermas seit "Erkenntnis und Interesse"* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2000), pp. 175-197, here p. 176; B. Fultner, 'Translator's Introduction', in Habermas, *On the Pragmatics of Social Interaction: Preliminary Studies in the Theory of Communicative Action*, pp. vii-xxiv, here pp. vii, ix-x, xv-xvi, and xxii; A. Honneth, 'La dynamique sociale du mépris. D'où parle une théorie critique de la société ?', in C. Bouchindhomme and R. Rochlitz, eds., *Habermas, la raison, la critique* (Paris: Cerf, 1996), pp. 215-238, here, pp. 225 and 237; N. Kompridis, 'Rethinking Critical Theory', *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 13(3), (2005), pp. 299-301, here p. 299; T. McCarthy, *The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1981), p. 415; S. Müller-Doohm, 'Kritik in kritischen Theorien. Oder: Wie kritisches Denken selber zu rechtfertigen sei', in Müller-Doohm, ed., *Das Interesse der Vernunft: Rückblicke auf das Werk von Jürgen Habermas seit "Erkenntnis und Interesse"*, pp. 71-106, here pp. 72-73 and 83-100; M. Papastephanou, 'Communicative Action and Philosophical Foundations: Comments on the Apel-Habermas Debate', *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 23(4), (1997), pp. 41-69, here pp. 41-48 and 51-62; M. K. Power, 'Habermas and the Counterfactual Imagination', in M. Rosenfeld and A. Arato, eds., *Habermas on Law and Democracy: Critical Exchanges*, Berkeley (California: University of California Press, 1998), pp. 207-225, here p. 207; G. Raulet, 'Critique de la raison communicationnelle', in Bouchindhomme and Rochlitz, eds., *Habermas, la raison, la critique*, pp. 69-103, here pp. 75-79; J. B. Thompson, *Critical Hermeneutics: A Study in the Thought of Paul Ricoeur and Jürgen Habermas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 82-84; and A. Wellmer, 'Practical Philosophy and the Theory of Society: On the Problem of the Normative Foundations of a Critical Social Science', in S. Benhabib and F. R. Dallmayr, eds., *The Communicative Ethics Controversy* (Cambridge, Mass., 1990 [1979]), pp. 293-329, here, p. 296.

2 See, for example, Habermas, *On the Pragmatics of Social Interaction: Preliminary Studies in the Theory of Communicative Action*, pp. 85-86, 93, 97-99, and 102-103.

'systematically distorted communication'.[3] Although the significance of these two concepts for Habermas's communication-theoretic approach to the social has been widely recognised and extensively debated in the literature[4], their overall importance for a critical theory of human empowerment and disempowerment has hardly been explored in a satisfying manner. At first glance, it seems that these two concepts stand in a contradictory, yet complementary, relationship: whilst the possibility of communication free from domination is diametrically opposed to the

3 See, for example, ibid., pp. 129-170.

4 On the concept of the 'ideal speech situation', see, for example: K.-O. Apel, 'Is the Ethics of the Ideal Communication Community a Utopia? On the Relationship between Ethics, Utopia, and the Critique of Utopia', in Benhabib and Dallmayr, eds., *The Communicative Ethics Controversy*, pp. 23-59, esp. pp. 24-25, 33-35, and 42-51; S. Benhabib, 'Afterword: Communicative Ethics and Contemporary Controversies in Practical Philosophy', in Benhabib and Dallmayr, eds., *The Communicative Ethics Controversy*, pp. 330-369, here pp. 330-331 and 343-345; R. J. M. Bernstein, *Recovering Ethical Life: Jürgen Habermas and the Future of Critical Theory* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 47-57; D. Böhler, 'Transcendental Pragmatics and Critical Morality: On the Possibility and Moral Significance of a Self-Enlightenment of Reason', in Benhabib and Dallmayr, eds., *The Communicative Ethics Controversy*, pp. 111-150, esp. pp. 114, 132-133, and 136; M. Cooke, *Language and Reason: A Study of Habermas's Pragmatics* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994), pp. 31, 172n.8, and 172-173n.9; R. A. Factor and S. P. Turner, 'The Critique of Positivist Social Science in Leo Strauss and Jürgen Habermas', *Sociological Analysis & Theory* 7(3) (1977), pp. 185-206, here pp. 194, 196, and 201-202; R. Geuss, *The Idea of a Critical Theory: Habermas and the Frankfurt School* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 65-75; M. J. Matustik, 'Habermas on Communicative Reason and Performative Contradiction', *New German Critique* 47, (1989), pp. 143-172, here pp. 159 and 166-167; L. Ray, 'Pragmatism and Critical Theory', *European Journal of Social Theory* 7(3), (2004), pp. 307-321, here pp. 309 and 315-317; and A. Trautsch, 'Glauben und Wissen. Jürgen Habermas zum Verhältnis von Philosophie und Religion', *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 111(1), (2004), pp. 180-198, here p. 183.

On the concept of 'systematically distorted communication', see, for example: J. Bohman, 'Formal Pragmatics and Social Criticism: The Philosophy of Language and the Critique of Ideology in Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action', *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 12(4), (1986), pp. 331-352, esp. pp. 332-333 and 336-344; G. Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 35; N. Crossley, 'On Systematically Distorted Communication: Bourdieu and the Socio-Analysis of Publics', in N. Crossley and J. M. Roberts, eds., *After Habermas: New Perspectives on the Public Sphere* (Oxford: Blackwell/Sociological Review, 2004), pp. 88-112, esp. pp. 88-89 and 109; A. Edgar, *The Philosophy of Habermas* (Montreal & Kingston, Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), pp. 153-157; Fultner, 'Translator's Introduction', pp. xx-xxi; Müller-Doohm, 'Kritik in kritischen Theorien. Oder: Wie kritisches Denken selber zu rechtfertigen sei', pp. 88 and 92-94; and M. Pusey, *Jürgen Habermas* (London: Routledge, 1987/1995), pp. 69-75.

reality of distorted communication, the empowering features of the former can challenge the disempowering consequences of the latter. This essay is an attempt to contribute to a more fine-grained understanding of the relationship between the empowerment and the disempowerment of the subject in Habermas's communication-theoretic approach to the social. Challenging idealistic and fatalistic conceptions of the social, the paper makes a case for the view that a comprehensive critical theory of society needs to account for both the emancipatory and the repressive potentials of language if it seeks to do justice to both the empowering and the disempowering potentials of the subject.

The paper is structured as follows. The first part argues that the self-formation of the subject is essentially characterised by a constant struggle between self-actualisation and self-alienation. The second part suggests that the construction of society is unavoidably shaped by the relationship between communicative processes of deliberation and systemic imperatives of functionalisation. The third part explains why the development of the human species cannot be understood without taking into account the interdependence between cognition and action. The fourth part looks into the anthropological presuppositions that undergird the early Habermas's communication-theoretic conception of the subject. The fifth part illustrates why the consolidation of emancipatory speech situations is a precondition for the creation of empowering life situations. The sixth part elucidates why the spread of distortive speech situations is conducive to the emergence of disempowering life situations. The seventh part puts forward the view that the very possibility of society depends on the subject's existential orientation towards intelligibility.

I.

Given its interest in the normative nature of social life, critical theory has always been concerned with the exploration of both the emancipatory and the repressive potentials of human existence. From the point of view of critical theory, the dialectics between the empowering and the disempowering forces of the human being-in-the-world manifest themselves in the antagonistic interplay between emancipation and domination. As a species capable of emancipation, we are able to liberate ourselves from structural sources of unnecessary constraints and repression. As a species capable of domination, we are able to construct systemic imperatives which obstruct the possibility of human self-realisation.

To be sure, different critical theories of society put forward different conceptions of the human self in order to account for our ambivalent situatedness between emancipation and domination. From a Kantian perspective, we are *rational* entities equipped with the capacity to determine our lives by virtue of reason.[5] According to Hegelian parameters, we are *intersubjective* entities seeking to affirm our existence by virtue of mutual recognition.[6] Relying on the Marxian conception of the world, we are *productive* entities able to shape the course of history by virtue of labour.[7] From a Freudian point of view, we are *desiderative* entities deemed to project ourselves upon the world by virtue of our sexual unconscious.[8] In Husserlian terms, we are *experiential* entities condemned to attribute meaning to our existence by virtue of our lifeworld.[9] Within the Heideggerian universe, we are *linguistic* entities

5 See I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, translated and edited by M. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997 [1788]).

6 See G. W. F. Hegel and L. Rauch, *Hegel and the Human Spirit: A Translation of the Jena Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit (1805-6)*, trans. L. Rauch (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1983).

7 See K. Marx and F. Engels, 'The German Ideology', in D. McLellan, ed., *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 2nd Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000/1977 [1846]), pp. 175-208.

8 See S. Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, trans. J. Riviere and J. Strachey, Rev. Edition (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1962 [1923]).

9 See E. Husserl and L. Landgrebe, *Experience and Judgment: Investigations in a Genealogy of Logic*, trans. J. S. Churchill and K. Ameriks (revised and edited by L. Landgrebe, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973 [1939]).

destined to build the house of being by virtue of language.[10] Following the Gadamerian vision, we are *prejudiced* entities prone to make sense of the world by virtue of culturally contingent preconceptions.[11] In accordance with the Habermasian account of the human species, we are *communicative* entities able to construct society by virtue of the intersubjective force of mutual understanding.[12]

What these theoretical approaches have in common is that they seek to identify the species-constitutive elements of human existence. What distinguishes these perspectives from one another, however, is their presuppositional specificity: they offer different accounts of the foundational elements which largely determine the constitution of human society. It may be relatively uncontroversial to assume *that* human existence is shaped by both emancipatory and repressive forces. Yet, it is far from uncontroversial *what* these forces exactly are and what kind of impact they may have upon the development of society. To the extent that the realisation of our species-constitutive potentials is a crucial source of self-actualisation (*Selbstverwirklichung*), the repression of these potentials is a decisive source of self-alienation (*Selbstentfremdung*). The emancipation of the human species depends on its capacity to unfold its self-empowering potentials; the domination of the human species is rooted in society's power to control and repress these potentials.

II.

From a Habermasian perspective, both social emancipation and social domination cannot be dissociated from the constitution of linguistic communication.[13] A society oriented towards emancipation is a society in

10 See M. Heidegger, *Pathmarks* (edited by W. McNeill, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

11 See H.-G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd Edition (translation revised by J. Weinsheimer and D. G. Marshall, London: Sheed & Ward, 1989 [1975]).

12 See J. Habermas, 'What is Universal Pragmatics?', in his *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, trans. T. McCarthy (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984 [1976]), pp. 1-68.

13 See, for example, J. Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action. Volume 2: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, trans. T. McCarthy (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987 [1981]), hereafter *TCA II*, pp. 374-403.

which communicative processes contribute to the *deliberative* rationalisation of human coexistence. A society oriented towards domination, by contrast, is a society in which communicative processes are colonised by the *systemic* rationalisation of human coexistence. The more a given society is capable of determining its development through the coordinative force of communicative action, the more its existence depends on intersubjectively constituted processes of deliberative rationalisation. The more a given society is prone to determine its development through the success-oriented force of purposive action, the more its existence is shaped by instrumentally driven mechanisms of systemic rationalisation. From a Habermasian point of view, then, human emancipation is intimately interrelated with communicative autonomy, that is, with people's deliberative capacity to coordinate – and, if necessary, discuss – their actions by relating to one another communicatively. Human domination, on the other hand, is closely intertwined with functional heteronomy, that is, with society's purposive capacity to influence – and, if required, control – people's actions by steering them systemically.

Within the Habermasian architecture of the social, the instrumentally driven system is diametrically opposed to the communicatively structured lifeworld.[14] Whereas the former is maintained through functionalist rationality, which is built into the purposive construction of both the polity and the economy, the latter is shaped by communicative rationality, which is intrinsic to the coordinative construction of humanity. Just as the increasing bureaucratisation and commodification of society are indicative of the growing functionalisation of human reality, the communicative structuration of the lifeworld is symptomatic of the discursive mediation of human interactions. The more the polity and the economy succeed in imposing their purposive-rational imperatives on the lifeworld, the more our everyday relations are colonised by the functional necessities of the system. Thus, according to Habermasian parameters, the relationship between emancipation and domination can be understood in terms of the interplay between lifeworld and system: whereas the empowering force of communicative reason is anchored in the lifeworld, the disempowering force of functionalist reason is imposed upon society by the system. Actors' communicative autonomy, developed in the lifeworld, is antithetical to their functional heteronomy, enforced upon

14 See ibid., pp. 153-197.

them by the system. The communicative nature of the lifeworld is the cradle of social emancipation; the instrumental nature of the system, by contrast, is the main structural source of social domination.

III.

Despite the substantial differences between his 'early' and his 'late' writings[15], Habermas's social theory is characterised by one central conviction: the idea that communicative action – i.e. action oriented towards mutual understanding – is an emancipatory force. The existential significance of the emancipatory nature of communicative action is expressed in the early Habermasian distinction between three knowledge-constitutive interests:[16] (i) the empirical-analytic sciences are driven by our *technical* cognitive interest in controlling the world, (ii) the historical-hermeneutic sciences are guided by our *practical* cognitive interest in reaching a communicatively mediated understanding about the world, and (iii) the critically oriented sciences articulate our *emancipatory* cognitive interest in liberating the human world from dependence on repressive forms of power. This anthropological account of the relationship between knowledge and interests obliges us to abandon the dream of scientific neutrality: the human production of knowledge is – always and unavoidably – interest-laden. If our technical orientation towards *instrumentality* is fundamental to the preservation of humanity, and if our practical orientation towards *intersubjectivity* is essential to the construction of society, our emancipatory orientation towards *reflexivity* is crucial to the formation of human autonomy and social responsibility.

15 The importance of these differences is reflected in the fact that, on some occasions, the 'late' Habermas explicitly distances himself from the 'early' Habermas. See, for example, J. Habermas, 'Nach dreißig Jahren: Bemerkungen zu Erkenntnis und Interesse', in Müller-Doohm, ed., *Das Interesse der Vernunft: Rückblicke auf das Werk von Jürgen Habermas seit "Erkenntnis und Interesse"*, pp. 12-20, esp. pp. 12-16, 18, and 20.

16 See J. Habermas, 'Knowledge and Human Interests: A General Perspective', in his *Knowledge and Human Interests*, trans. J. J. Shapiro (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987 [1965/1968]), pp. 301-317. See also J. Habermas, 'Reason and Interest: Retrospect on Kant and Fichte', in ibid., pp. 191-213, and J. Habermas, 'A Postscript to *Knowledge and Human Interests*', in ibid., pp. 351-386.

Whereas from a Nietzschean and Foucauldian point of view we have a will to power[17], from a Kantian and Habermasian perspective we have a will to reason.[18] In fact, reason *is* power: a rational power derived from and developed through the communicative experience of the world. As the early Habermas insists, our will to reason is "a will to emancipation":[19]

> I mean the experience of the emancipatory power of reflection, which the subject experiences in itself to the extent that it becomes transparent to itself in the history of its genesis. The experience of reflection articulates itself substantially in the concept of a self-formative process. Methodically it leads to a standpoint from which the identity of reason with the will to reason freely arises. In self-reflection, knowledge for the sake of knowledge comes to coincide with the interest in autonomy and responsibility (*Mündigkeit*). For the pursuit of reflection knows itself as a movement of emancipation. Reason is at the same time subject to the interest in reason. We can say that it obeys an *emancipatory cognitive interest*, which aims at the pursuit of reflection.[20]

In other words, our emancipatory cognitive interest in critical reflection is not a mere fantasy; far from representing a fictitious element of an ideological imaginary, our interest in liberation through reflection manifests itself in the emancipatory nature of human reason. "Indeed, the category of cognitive interest is authenticated only by the interest innate in reason. The technical and practical cognitive interests can be comprehended unambiguously as knowledge-constitutive interests only in connection with the emancipatory cognitive interest of rational

17 See F. W. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. W. A. Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968), and M. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977* (edited by C. Gordon, translated by C. Gordon [et al.], Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980).

18 See Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, and Habermas, *On the Pragmatics of Social Interaction: Preliminary Studies in the Theory of Communicative Action* (esp. pp. 85-103).

19 Habermas, 'Reason and Interest: Retrospect on Kant and Fichte', p. 205.

20 Ibid., pp. 197-198 (italics in original).

reflection."[21] Our technical cognitive interest in *controlling* our natural environment and our practical cognitive interest in *communicating* with our social environment cannot be divorced from our emancipatory cognitive interest in *self-realising* ourselves through our natural and social environment. Our will to exercise control *over* the world and our will to communicate *with* the world are embedded in our will to emancipate ourselves *through* the world.

To be sure, the tripartite typology of our knowledge-constitutive interests is indicative of the cognitive complexity of human ontology: as purposive, communicative, and contemplative entities, we are oriented towards instrumentality, intersubjectivity, and reflexivity. The self-formative nature of human existence is based on the purposive, communicative, and contemplative potentials of human reason. Given the teleological (*zielorientiert*), societal (*gesellschaftsorientiert*), and thoughtful (*gedankenorientiert*) nature of our immersion in the world, we need to face up to the inevitable interest-ladenness of our existence. "It is in accomplishing self-reflection that reason grasps itself as interested"[22], and it is the task of critical theory to uncover the interest-laden constitution of rational entities. We are oriented towards instrumentality, intersubjectivity, and reflexivity because we have an interest in the preservation of humanity, the construction of society, and the formation of autonomy.

IV.

The early Habermasian view that our immersion in life is permeated by an "[o]rientation toward technical control, toward mutual understanding in the conduct of life, and toward emancipation from seemingly "natural" constraint"[23] is based on five anthropological assumptions.

The first presupposition is that "*[t]he achievements of the transcendental subject have their basis in the natural history of the human species*"[24]. Thus, far from regarding the transcendental subject as a supernatural force placed outside history, the human species is to be

21 Ibid, p. 198.

22 Ibid., p. 212 (italics removed from the entire sentence).

23 Habermas, 'Knowledge and Human Interests: A General Perspective', p. 311.

24 Ibid., p. 312 (italics in original).

conceived of as a collective actor situated within the horizon of worldly immanence. In other words, 'transcendental' means not 'above' or 'outside' the world but *necessarily* 'within' and 'through' the world. The history of the transcendental subject is the history of a worldly subject compelled to come to terms with the conditions of its own natural constitution.

The second hypothesis is that "*knowledge equally serves as an instrument and transcends mere self*-preservation"[25]. Instead of falling into the naturalistic fallacy of reducing the production of human knowledge to a mere manifestation of our purposive immersion in the world, here our cognitive relation to the world is also understood in terms of its normative and reflexive dimensions. As subjects capable of cognition and action we are oriented not only towards self-preservation but also towards communication and reflection. The tripartite constitution of our knowledge-guiding interests emanates from our purposive, communicative, and reflective capacities as a species. Given our communicative capacity to develop codes of normativity and our emancipatory capacity to contemplate ourselves through the exercise of self-reflexivity, knowledge must not be reduced to an expression of our teleological capacity to convert the world into a purpose-driven universe of instrumentality. For "the three knowledge-constitutive interests [...] derive both from nature and *from the cultural break* with nature. Along with the tendency to realize natural drives they have incorporated the tendency toward release from the constraint of nature."[26] Not only do we aim to preserve our life as a species, but we also seek to create "the good life"[27] for ourselves as a species.

The third contention is that "*knowledge-constitutive interests take form in the medium of work, language, and power*"[28]. Rather than relegating our knowledge-constitutive interests to the scholastic sphere of philosophical abstraction, the point is to recognise that they are anchored in ubiquitous forces of human reality: work, language, and power. Our technical cognitive interest in controlling the world is expressed in the *purposive* force of labour; our practical cognitive interest in communicating with the world is represented in the *intersubjective* force

25 Ibid., p. 313 (italics in original).
26 Ibid., p. 312 (italics in original).
27 Ibid., p. 313 (italics removed).
28 Ibid. (italics in original).

of language; and our emancipatory cognitive interest in realising ourselves in the world is challenged by the *performative* force of power. These three existential orientations – which are indicative of the cross-cultural validity of the motivational driving forces of human cognition – "originate in the interest structure of a species that is linked in its roots to definite means of social organization"[29]. To the extent that the production of knowledge is intimately interrelated with the production of human life, our knowledge-constitutive interests (*erkenntnisleitende Interessen*) reflect life-constitutive interests (*lebensleitende Interessen*) of the human species. Only if we account for the fact that we are a purposive, communicative, and reflective species can we comprehend that our knowledge cannot be dissociated from work, language, and power.

The fourth assertion is that "*in the power of self-reflection, knowledge and interest are one*"[30]. The distinctively human exercise of self-reflection is endowed with an emblematic status because it illustrates that we can be existentially closest to ourselves when reflectively most distanced from ourselves. Distancing ourselves from ourselves contemplatively allows us to approximate ourselves to ourselves responsibly. The power of reflexivity is closely tied to the power of linguisticality: speaking about the world we are capable of reflecting upon the world. The self-understanding (*Selbstverständnis*) of every subject is inconceivable without mutual understanding (*Verständigung*). Just as there is no reason (*Verstand*) without communication (*Verständigung*), there is no communication (*Verständigung*) without comprehension (*Verständnis*). It is through language that, in a collective effort of humanisation, we have learned to reflect upon ourselves by reflecting with and through others. "The human interest in autonomy and responsibility is not mere fancy, for it can be apprehended a priori. What raises us out of nature is the only thing whose nature we can know: *language*. Through its structure, autonomy and responsibility are posited for us. Our first sentence expresses unequivocally the intention of universal and unconstrained consensus."[31] Our orientation towards reaching understanding (*Verständigung*) anticipates our orientation towards agreement (*Einverständnis*), for subjects capable of mutual understanding are also, at least in principle, capable of mutual agreement. Understanding implies

29 Ibid.
30 Ibid., p. 314 (italics in original).
31 Ibid. (italics in original).

the will to understanding; agreement presupposes the will to agreement; and "[r]eason also means the will to reason. In self-reflection knowledge for the sake of knowledge attains congruence with the interest in autonomy and responsibility. The emancipatory cognitive interest aims at the pursuit of reflection as such."[32] As children of humanity we are carriers of communicative reflexivity.

The fifth, and final, thesis is that "*the unity of knowledge and interest proves itself in a dialectic that takes the historical traces of suppressed dialogue and reconstructs what has been suppressed*"[33]. If knowledge is articulated through human language and if knowledge is a carrier of human interests, then our linguistic relation to the world is impregnated with the interest-laden nature of human life. The ideal nature of an emancipatory social formation is anticipated by the ideal nature of emancipatory communication. "However, only in an emancipated society, whose members' autonomy and responsibility had been realized, would communication have developed into the non-authoritarian and universally practical dialogue from which both our model of reciprocally constituted ego identity and our idea of true consensus are always implicitly derived. To this extent the truth of statements is based on anticipating the realization of the good life. [...] [T]he autonomy and responsibility posited with the structure of language are not only anticipated but real."[34] In the long run, "the path to unconstrained communication"[35] is doomed to failure without the path to an unconstrained society. The understanding-oriented nature of linguisticality, which endows us with a sense of both autonomy and responsibility, is rooted in the understanding-oriented nature of society: our capacity to talk with one another emanates from our need to live with one another. A society without dialogue is just as absurd as a dialogue without society. It is from mouth to mouth that we have converted the performative capacity of our *Mund* into the normative capacity of *Mündigkeit*. Our reliance upon mutual intelligibility has led us to develop a sense of social responsibility.

Taken together, the five theses outlined above lay the presuppositional foundation for Habermas's communication-theoretic conception of the human subject. In other words, a subject capable of speech and action is

32 Ibid.
33 Ibid., p. 315 (italics in original).
34 Ibid., p. 314.
35 Ibid., p. 315.

(i) a transcendental subject, (ii) a cultural subject, (iii) a cognitional subject, (iv) a moral subject, and (v) a dialogical subject. (i) As a *transcendental* subject, the human species is a collective historical actor spatiotemporally situated in the world. (ii) As a *cultural* subject, the human species elevates itself above nature and places itself within society, transcending the drive for self-preservation through the urge for self-realisation. (iii) As a *cognitional* subject, the human species is capable of mobilising its purposive, linguistic, and reflective capacities to determine the course of history. (iv) As a *moral* subject, the human species is able to develop a sense of autonomy and responsibility through the communicative force of consensual intelligibility. (v) As a *dialogical* subject, the human species is equipped with the communicative ability to attribute meaning to the world by virtue of the quotidian exercise of mutual understanding. These five anthropological features are fundamental characteristics of all subjects capable of speech and action.

V.

Every subject capable of forming real speech acts is also capable of constructing ideal speech situations. If we recognise that "the formal qualities of ideal speech situations"[36] are "those structural elements of communication which make reasoning possible"[37], we can comprehend that the idealising presuppositions of speech acts represent constitutive elements of ordinary language, rather than hypothetical conditions of scholastic thought experiments. In other words, the ideal speech situation is *presupposed* by linguistic communication, since the latter always already contains the structural characteristics of the former. Thus, the ideal speech situation is implicitly present every time subjects capable of speech and action engage in the linguistic exercise of reasoning. To assume that "the *emancipatory interest in knowledge* has a derivative status"[38] means to suppose that both the technical interest in shaping the physical world and the practical interest in communicating with the social world are inextricably linked to the emancipatory interest in reflecting upon the world. As self-formative beings, we are able to get rid of

36 Habermas, 'A Postscript to *Knowledge and Human Interests*', p. 362.
37 Ibid., pp. 362-363.
38 Ibid., p. 371 (italics in original).

unnecessary constraints and create the social conditions of a 'good life'. In this sense, the possibility of the ideal *speech* situation hints at the possibility of an ideal *life* situation, that is, at the viability of a society whose development depends on people's deliberative capacities.

To be sure, communicative deliberation is preponderant over communicative distortion: "the structure of distorted communication is not ultimate; it has its basis in the logic of undistorted language communication."[39] Put differently, distorted forms of communication are always parasitic upon undistorted forms of communication. For if, following Habermas, we accept that communicative action is oriented towards reaching understanding, then distorted forms of communication can diverge from, but not undermine, the foundational status of undistorted forms of communication. The point is not to put forward the somewhat idealistic view that the ideal speech situation is the prototype of ordinary communication. Rather, the point is to acknowledge that even in distorted forms of communication, which substantially deviate from ideal speech scenarios, we need to presuppose the conditions of an ideal speech situation in order to allow for the very possibility of linguistic communication. Our linguistic orientation towards intelligibility constitutes the existential ground for our normative orientation towards responsibility.

> In a certain way, mature autonomy [*Mündigkeit*] is the sole idea which we have at our disposal in the sense of the philosophical tradition [...] for in every speech act the *telos* of reaching an understanding [*Verständigung*] is already inherent. "With the very first sentence the intention of a general and voluntary consensus is unmistakably enunciated." [...] Wittgenstein has remarked that the concept of reaching an understanding lies in the concept of language. We can only say in a self-explicative sense that language communication 'serves' this reaching of an understanding. Every understanding reached is confirmed in a reasonable consensus, as we say; otherwise it does not represent a 'real' understanding. Competent orators know that every consensus attained can in fact be deceptive; but they must always have been in possession of the prior concept of the rational consensus underlying the concept of a deceptive (or merely compulsory) consensus. Reaching an understanding is a normative concept; everyone who speaks a natural language has intuitive knowledge of it and therefore is confident of being able, in principle, to distinguish a true consensus from a false one.[40]

39 J. Habermas, 'Introduction: Some Difficulties in the Attempt to Link Theory and Praxis', in his *Theory and Practice*, trans. J. Viertel (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988 [1971]), pp. 1-40, here p. 17.

In other words, the difference between a *true consensus* and a *false consensus* lies at the heart of the distinction between *undistorted communication* and *distorted communication*. Every subject capable of speech and action knows that an attained consensus can be true on the surface and false in reality. A consensus which is forced upon people without taking into account the opinions and necessities of everybody affected can hardly claim to be a true form of agreement. By contrast, a consensus which has been reached by people who succeed in considering the opinions and necessities of every member concerned can indeed assert to be a genuine form of agreement. The concept of the ideal speech situation, then, captures what is always already real: the orientation towards understanding and agreement inherent in ordinary language.

The Habermasian notion of the ideal speech situation is intimately tied to the idea that speech acts are oriented towards reaching understanding, for it epitomises the understanding-oriented *Gesellschaftlichkeit*[41] which is built into the *Sprachlichkeit*[42] of human existence. The utopian moment of human existence is not simply a mental fantasy, but it is built into the very structure of language, since, following Habermas, "in every discourse we are mutually required to presuppose an ideal speech situation"[43]. In the ideal speech situation "communication is impeded neither by external contingent forces nor, more importantly, by constraints arising from the structure of communication itself. The ideal speech situation excludes systematic distortion of communication."[44] To be more precise, the thesis that the ideal speech situation constitutes a

40 Ibid. (italics in original).

41 Literal translation from German into English: 'sociability'.

42 Literal translation from German into English: 'linguisticality'.

43 Habermas, *On the Pragmatics of Social Interaction: Preliminary Studies in the Theory of Communicative Action*, p. 97.

44 Ibid.

necessary presupposition of communication is based on the following six key assumptions:

(i) the understanding-oriented nature of communication allows us to come to an intersubjectively established *agreement*;

(ii) we can distinguish between a *genuine* and a *deceptive* agreement;

(iii) in order to guarantee that an agreement is genuine, we need to rely on the *unforced force of the better argument*;

(iv) genuine agreement can only be claimed to exist as long as communication is *not* obstructed by *internal or external constraints*;

(v) communication that is genuinely free from internal and external constraints presupposes the *symmetrical distribution of chances* to select and employ constative, regulative, expressive, and communicative speech acts; and

(vi) only a situation in which this symmetrical distribution of chances is guaranteed can be called an *ideal speech situation*.[45]

45 Cf. J. B. Thompson, 'Universal Pragmatics', in J. B. Thompson and D. Held, eds., *Habermas: Critical Debates* (London: Macmillan 1982), pp. 116-133, here p. 128. It should be noted, however, that Habermas dissociates himself from the term 'ideal speech situation' in his later works in order to avoid an 'essentialist misunderstanding', as he calls it. According to this misunderstanding, the 'ideal' or 'transcendental' presuppositions of every speech act are located outside, rather than within, the world. Yet, Habermas makes it clear that the 'ideal' or 'transcendental' presuppositions inherent in ordinary speech are always world-embedded (*weltimmanent*). – See J. Habermas, 'The Sociological Translation of the Concept of Deliberative Politics', in his *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, trans. W. Rehg (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996 [1992]), pp. 315-328, here p. 323: "The counterfactual presuppositions assumed by participants in argumentation indeed open up a perspective allowing them to go beyond local practices of justification and to transcend the provinciality of their spatiotemporal contexts that are inescapable in action and experience. This perspective thus enables them to do justice to the meaning of *context-transcending* validity claims. But with context-transcending validity claims, they are not themselves transported into the beyond of an ideal realm of noumenal beings. [...] This thought experiment [of the ideal communication community] [...] refers to concrete societies that are situated in space and time and already differentiated." (Italics in original.)

In short, the ideal speech situation is an intersubjectively created communicative space that allows the speakers to reach an agreement by virtue of the force of the better argument, without this communicative force being hindered by internal or external constraints, and with a symmetrical distribution of chances to choose and utter speech acts.

On the whole, the concept of the ideal speech situation has five main macrotheoretical implications for Habermas's account of the social. First, it locates the emancipatory potential of the social in the subject's

On the Habermasian notion of the 'ideal speech situation', see also, for example: J. Habermas, 'Dogmatism, Reason, and Decision: On Theory and Praxis in Our Scientific Civilization', in his *Theory and Practice*, (1988 [1963]), pp. 253-282, here pp. 279 and 281; J. Habermas, 'Towards a Theory of Communicative Competence', *Inquiry* 13(4), (1970), pp. 360-375, here pp. 367 and 371-374; J. Habermas, 'Introduction: Some Difficulties in the Attempt to Link Theory and Praxis', p. 17; *TCA I*, p. 42; J. Habermas, 'Discourse Ethics: Notes on a Program of Philosophical Justification', in his *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, trans. C. Lenhardt and S. Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990 [1983]), pp. 43-115, here pp. 86-94; Habermas, *On the Pragmatics of Social Interaction: Preliminary Studies in the Theory of Communicative Action*, pp. 85-86, 93, 97-99, and 102-103; J. Habermas, 'An Alternative Way out of the Philosophy of the Subject: Communicative versus Subject-Centered Reason', in his *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. F. Lawrence (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987 [1985]), pp. 294-326, here p. 323; J. Habermas, 'Morality, Society, and Ethics: An Interview with Torben Hviid Nielsen', in his *Justification and Application: Remarks on Discourse Ethics*, trans. C. Cronin (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993 [1990]), pp. 147-176, here pp. 163-165; J. Habermas, 'Remarks on Discourse Ethics', in his *Justification and Application: Remarks on Discourse Ethics*, (1993 [1991]), pp. 19-111, here pp. 54-57; Habermas, 'The Sociological Translation of the Concept of Deliberative Politics', pp. 322-323; J. Habermas, 'Reconciliation through the Public Use of Reason: Remarks on John Rawls's Political Liberalism', *Journal of Philosophy* 92(3), (1995), pp. 109-131, here p. 117; J. Habermas, *Kommunikatives Handeln und detranszendentalisierte Vernunft* (Stuttgart: Reclam, Ditzingen, 2001), pp. 7-8, 10-13, 23, 29, 37, 42, 45-47, 52, and 83-84; and J. Habermas, 'Freiheit und Determinismus', *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 52(6), (2004), pp. 871-890, here p. 875.

In the secondary literature see, for example: Apel, 'Is the Ethics of the Ideal Communication Community a Utopia? On the Relationship between Ethics, Utopia, and the Critique of Utopia', esp. pp. 24-25, 33-35, and 42-51; Benhabib, 'Afterword: Communicative Ethics and Contemporary Controversies in Practical Philosophy', pp. 330-331 and 343-345; Bernstein, *Recovering Ethical Life: Jürgen Habermas and the Future of Critical Theory*, pp. 47-57; Böhler, 'Transcendental Pragmatics and Critical Morality: On the Possibility and Moral Significance of a

discursive capacity (*discursive power*). Second, it suggests that utopia is unavoidably anticipated in every communicative speech act (*anticipatory power*). Third, it detranscendentalises the notion of counterfactuality insofar as it attributes an emancipatory status to the necessary presuppositions inherent in ordinary language (*ordinary power*). Fourth, it regards the "counterfactual conditions of the ideal speech situation [...] as necessary conditions of an emancipated form of life"[46] (*foundational power*). Fifth, it serves as a yardstick for the critical analysis of systematically distorted communication (*normative power*).

Self-Enlightenment of Reason', esp. pp. 114, 132-133, and 136; M. Cooke, 'Habermas and Consensus', *European Journal of Philosophy* 1(3), (1993), pp. 247-267, here p. 253; Cooke, *Language and Reason: A Study of Habermas's Pragmatics*, pp. 31, 172n.8, and 172-173n.9; M. Cooke, 'Are Ethical Conflicts Irreconcilable?', *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 23(2), (1997), pp. 1-19, here pp. 9-13; M. Cooke, 'Redeeming Redemption: The Utopian Dimension of Critical Social Theory', *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 30(4), (2004), pp. 413-429; N. Davey, 'Habermas' Contribution to Hermeneutic Theory', *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 16(2), (1985), pp. 109-131, here pp. 113-114 and 120; Factor and Turner, 'The Critique of Positivist Social Science in Leo Strauss and Jürgen Habermas', pp. 194, 196, and 201-202; A. Ferrara, 'A Critique of Habermas' Consensus Theory of Truth', *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 13, (1987), pp. 39-67, here pp. 44-45; Fultner, 'Translator's Introduction', pp. xv-xvi; F. I. Gamwell, 'Habermas and Apel on Communicative Ethics: Their Difference and the Difference it Makes', *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 23(2), (1997), pp. 21-45, here p. 37; Geuss, *The Idea of a Critical Theory: Habermas and the Frankfurt School*, pp. 65-75; K. Günther, 'Communicative Freedom, Communicative Power, and Jurisgenesis', in Rosenfeld and Arato, eds., *Habermas on Law and Democracy: Critical Exchanges*, pp. 234-254, esp. pp. 235-236; R. J. Kilby, 'Critical Thinking, Epistemic Virtue, and the Significance of Inclusion: Reflections on Harvey Siegel's Theory of Rationality', *Educational Theory* 54(3), (2004), pp. 299-313, here p. 308; L. Koczanowicz, 'The Choice of Tradition and the Tradition of Choice: Habermas' and Rorty's interpretation of Pragmatism', *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 25(1), (1999), pp. 55-70, here p. 57; Matustik, 'Habermas on Communicative Reason and Performative Contradiction', pp. 159 and 166-167; T. McCarthy, 'A Theory of Communicative Competence', *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 3(2), (1973), pp. 135-156, pp. 145-148; J. Mendelson, 'The Habermas-Gadamer Debate', *New German Critique* 18, (1979), pp. 44-73, here pp. 71-73; P. Milley, 'Imagining Good Organizations: Moral Orders or Moral Communities?', *Educational Management Administration and Leadership* 30(1), (2002), pp. 47-64, here p. 58; G. R. Mitchell, 'Did Habermas Cede Nature to the Positivists?', *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 36(1), (2003), pp. 1-21, here p. 7; Ray, 'Pragmatism and Critical Theory', pp. 309 and 315-317; and Trautsch, 'Glauben und Wissen. Jürgen Habermas zum Verhältnis von Philosophie und Religion', p. 183.

46 Habermas, *On the Pragmatics of Social Interaction: Preliminary Studies in the Theory of Communicative Action*, p. 99.

Thus, the notion of the ideal speech situation allows us to understand Habermas's conception of emancipation in terms of five forms of power. (1) *Discursive power*: If the emancipatory potential of the social is to be located in the subject's discursive capacity, then our ability to shape the development of society by virtue of critical reasoning is an indispensable feature of human emancipation. (2) *Anticipatory power*: If utopia is unavoidably anticipated in every communicative speech act, then there remains an emancipatory element even in the most repressive forms of society, no matter how systematically distorted or structurally deformed communication may be in a particular socio-historical context. (3) *Ordinary power*: If the concept of the ideal speech situation detranscendentalises the notion of counterfactuality by attributing an emancipatory status to the necessary presuppositions inherent in ordinary language, then every subject capable of speech and action – regardless of its social status and linguistic capital – is equipped with the dispositional tools to contribute to the consolidation of a consensually constructed society. (4) *Foundational power*: If the counterfactual conditions of the ideal speech situation can be considered as constitutive elements of an emancipated form of life, then the possibility of a society beyond domination depends on the reality of sociality through communication. (5) *Normative power*: If the concept of the ideal speech situation serves as a yardstick for the critical analysis of systematically distorted communication, then the reality of social domination can be measured against the possibility of ideal communication.

VI.

As a normative yardstick, the ideal speech situation is crucial to Habermas's communication-theoretic critique of power, for we can only recognise the factual distortion of language if we are able to identify the necessary conditions of its counterfactual non-distortion.

> [...] communication can be systematically distorted only if the internal organization of speech is disrupted. This happens if the validity basis of linguistic communication is curtailed *surreptitiously*; that is, without leading to a break in communication or to the transition to openly declared and permissible strategic action. The validity basis of speech is curtailed surreptitiously if at least one of the three universal validity claims [...] is violated and communication nonetheless continues on the presumption of *communicative* (not strategic) action oriented toward reaching mutual understanding.[47]

47 Ibid., pp. 154-155 (italics in original).

On the Habermasian concept of 'systematically distorted communication', see also, for example: Habermas, 'Towards a Theory of Communicative Competence', p. 374; Habermas, 'Introduction: Some Difficulties in the Attempt to Link Theory and Praxis', pp. 16 and 24; *TCA I*, pp. 332-333; *TCA II*, pp. 134, 141-143, and 148; Habermas, *On the Pragmatics of Social Interaction: Preliminary Studies in the Theory of Communicative Action*, pp. 99 and 129-170; and Habermas, 'Nach dreißig Jahren: Bemerkungen zu *Erkenntnis und Interesse*', pp. 15-18.

In the secondary literature see, for example: A. Abbas and M. McLean, 'Communicative Competence and the Improvement of University Teaching: Insights from the Field', *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 24(1), (2003), pp. 69-81, here p. 71; Bernstein, *Recovering Ethical Life: Jürgen Habermas and the Future of Critical Theory*, pp. 44-47; Bohman, 'Formal Pragmatics and Social Criticism: The Philosophy of Language and the Critique of Ideology in Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action', esp. pp. 332-333 and 336-344; J. Bohman, 'Distorted Communication: Formal Pragmatics as a Critical Theory', in L. E. Hahn, ed., *Perspectives on Habermas* (Chicago and La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 2000), pp. 3-20; Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida*, p. 35; Crossley, 'On Systematically Distorted Communication: Bourdieu and the Socio-Analysis of Publics', esp. pp. 88-89 and 109; Edgar, *The Philosophy of Habermas*, pp. 153-157; Fultner, 'Translator's Introduction', pp. xx-xxi; C. B. Grant, 'Rethinking Communicative Interaction: An Interdisciplinary Programme', in C. B. Grant, ed., *Rethinking Communicative Interaction: New Interdisciplinary Horizons* (Amsterdam: J. Benjamins, 2003), pp. 1-26, here p. 14; M. Hesse, 'Habermas' Consensus Theory of Truth', in her *Revolutions and Reconstructions in the Philosophy of Science* (Brighton, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1980), pp. 206-231, here p. 215; J. Kilby, 'Critical Thinking, Epistemic Virtue, and the Significance of Inclusion: Reflections on Harvey Siegel's Theory of Rationality', p. 308; Mitchell, 'Did Habermas Cede Nature to the Positivists?', p. 8; Müller-Doohm, 'Kritik in kritischen Theorien. Oder: Wie kritisches Denken selber zu rechtfertigen sei', pp. 88 and 92-94; F. Poupeau, 'Reasons for Domination, Bourdieu versus Habermas', in B. Fowler, ed., *Reading Bourdieu on Society and Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell/Sociological Review, 2000), pp. 69-87, esp. p. 73; Pusey, *Jürgen Habermas*, pp. 69-75; Y. Sintomer, 'Bourdieu et Habermas', in his *La démocratie impossible ? Politique et modernité chez Weber et Habermas* (Paris: La Découverte & Syros, 1999), pp. 158-162; U. Steinhoff, *Kritik der kommunikativen Rationalität: Eine Gesamtdarstellung und Analyse der kommunikationstheoretischen jüngeren Kritischen Theorie* (Marsberg: Die Deutsche Bibliothek, 2001), pp. 333-343; and Thompson, *Critical Hermeneutics: A Study in the Thought of Paul Ricoeur and Jürgen Habermas*, pp. 94-95.

Systematically distorted communication can be regarded as the *antithesis* of the *ideal speech situation*, for the former covertly violates the presuppositions of the latter. The power of linguistic validity is always also the power of discursive transparency: what is communicatively valid can be discursively questioned. The power of systematic distortedness is always also the power of deceptive secretiveness: what is strategically distorted can be deceptively concealed. Whenever the endogenous validity of ordinary speech is surreptitiously encroached upon by the exogenous instrumentality of strategic force, the power of discourse is undermined by the power of deception. The more we are caught up in distortive deceptiveness, the more powerful is the secretive potential of strategic action; the more we engage in argumentative discursiveness, the more powerful is the emancipatory potential of communicative action.

Since the systematicity of distortive instrumentality is always parasitically dependent upon the ubiquity of communicative validity, the projection of the merely strategic community goes against the structure of language, whereas the "projection of the unlimited communication community is backed up by the structure of language itself."[48] Therefore, the concept of the ideal speech situation serves both as a detour and as a shortcut: as a detour, it idealises the structural conditions under which an emancipatory society *could* be realised; as a shortcut, it directly recognises that these conditions are *always already* existent in ordinary language. Reciprocal recognition articulated through language is the recognition of the other not only as a conversational interlocutor

48 J. Habermas, 'Individuation through Socialization: On George Herbert Mead's Theory of Subjectivity', in his *Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays*, trans. W. M. Hohengarten (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992 [1988]), pp. 149-204, here p. 188.

(*Gesprächspartner*), but also as an existential interlocutor (*Lebenspartner*). The ideal of an "unlimited communication community"[49] (*Kommunikationsgemeinschaft*) is the ideal of an "unlimited life community" (*Lebensgemeinschaft*). In the long term, human existence is only conceivable in terms of consensus-oriented coexistence.

Systematically distorted communication is the antinomy of the ideal speech situation, for the disempowering features of the former violate the empowering aspects of the latter: under the condition of systematically distorted communication, agreements can only be deceptive; under the condition of the ideal speech situation, by contrast, agreements can only be genuine.

In analogy to the notion of the ideal speech situation, the concept of systematically distorted communication has five main macrotheoretical implications for Habermas's conception of the social. First, it locates the repressive potential of the social in the distortive capacity of strategic action and systemic imperatives (*distortive power*). Second, it implies that domination is, however subtly, reinforced in every systematically distorted speech act (*reproductive power*). Third, it linguistifies the notion of domination insofar as it ascribes sociological significance to the distortive use of language (*performative power*). Fourth, it conceives of systematically distorted communication as a parasitic deformation of understanding-oriented action (*parasitic power*). Fifth, it serves as a yardstick for the critical analysis of the ideal speech situation (*normative power*).

Just as the concept of the ideal speech situation is central to Habermas's conception of social emancipation, the concept of systematically distorted communication is fundamental to his notion of social domination. The significance of systematically distorted communication for Habermas's communication-theoretic account of the social is reflected in its multifaceted power. (1) *Distortive power*: If the repressive potential of the social is to be located in the distortive potential of strategic action and systemic imperatives, then our capacity to shape the development of society in accordance with strategic calculations and systemic necessities is a constitutive element of human domination. (2)

49 Ibid., pp. 184 and 188. See also M. Cooke, 'Habermas, Autonomy and the Identity of the Self', *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 18(3/4), (1992), pp. 269-291, here pp. 273-275.

Reproductive power: If domination is necessarily reinforced in every systematically distorted speech act, then there remains a repressive element even in seemingly insignificantly distorted forms of communication, no matter how equally distributed and deliberatively structured communication may be in a particular socio-historical context. (3) *Performative power*: If the concept of systematically distorted communication linguistifies the notion of domination by ascribing sociological significance to the distortive use of language, then every subject capable of speech and action – regardless of its social status and linguistic capital – is equipped with the dispositional tools to contribute to the proliferation of a systematically distorted society. (4) *Parasitic power*: If the deceptive nature of systematically distorted communication can be considered as a parasitic deformation of understanding-oriented action, then the corrosive force of strategic action remains dependent on the coordinative power of communicative action. (5) *Normative power*: If the concept of systematically distorted communication serves as a yardstick for the critical analysis of the ideal speech situation, then the disempowering effects of social domination can only be understood in relation to the empowering characteristics of social emancipation.

VII.

The problem of systematically distorted communication obliges us to reflect upon the difference between communicative action and strategic action, that is, upon the competing relationship between two forms of human action which are fundamental to the construction of social order. To be more precise, "communication pathologies can be conceived of as the result of a *confusion* between actions oriented to teaching understanding and actions oriented to success"[50]. Undistorted communication occurs whenever all parties involved in the communication process are, at least in principle, aware of the nature of their interaction. Thus, strategic action is not a source of systematically distorted communication *per se*; it is only a source of distortion if at least one party engages in strategically motivated interaction on the presumption that the encounter is primarily communicative, rather than strategic. If "one of the parties is deceiving himself about the fact that he

50 *TCA I*, p. 332 (italics added).

is acting with an attitude oriented to success and is only keeping up the appearance of communicative action"[51], it is appropriate to characterise his action as systematically distorted. Hence, *deception* is a constitutive component of systematically distorted communication. It is not *open* strategic action but *concealed* strategic action which is the breeding ground for distorted forms of social interaction, for it is the deceptive force of a distortedly deformed unconscious which can undermine the transparent force of our communicatively constructed consciousness.

Distortive deceptions can be located on various presuppositional levels of communicative interactions. "The strongest cases of systematic distortions are those in which the speaking subjects themselves are unaware of their violation of communicative presuppositions, such as when a competent speaker expresses herself unintelligibly without realizing it, when one spouse deceives herself about her feelings for the other, or when a speaker thinks she is acting in accordance with social norms but is actually violating them."[52] In other words, systematically distorted communication undermines the (i) assertive, (ii) normative, (iii) expressive, and (iv) communicative presuppositions of speech acts. (i) The assertive nature of language allows us to assume that a speech act is true. (ii) The normative nature of language permits us to suppose that a speech act is right. (iii) The expressive nature of language makes us believe that a speech act is sincere. And (iv) the communicative nature of language enables us to ensure that a speech act is intelligible. In cases of systematically distorted communication, however, the presuppositions of ordinary speech are violated. We are not aware of the violation of communicative presuppositions (i) when we consider something to be true even if it is actually false, (ii) when we assume that we obey specific social norms although we are in fact undermining them, (iii) when we deceive ourselves – consciously or unconsciously – about the truthfulness of our utterances, or (iv) when we express ourselves incomprehensibly but do not notice that we are doing so.

In all four cases, actors are at the same time protagonists and victims of communicative deception. The power of distorted communication derives from its capacity to deceive the deceivers themselves. Indeed, there is no stronger form of deception than self-deception. Every *subject capable of speech and action* is not only a *subject capable of speech and*

51 Ibid.

52 Fultner, 'Translator's Introduction', p. xxi.

reflection but also a *subject capable of speech and deception*. If we were unable to violate the presuppositions of ordinary speech acts, it would be pointless to explore the sociological value of functional, as opposed to dysfunctional, communication processes. Empowering forms of intelligibility are a *sine qua non* for empowering forms of society. To regard the critique of systematically distorted communication as a critique of systematically distorted socialisation means to appreciate the significance of understanding-oriented forms of agency for the very possibility of a responsibly regulated society. Just as we cannot do without mutual understanding, we cannot do without at least a minimal degree of truth, rightness, sincerity, and intelligibility. To acknowledge the parasitic status of systematically distorted communication means to recognise that human interactions based on deception cannot generate sustainable forms of social organisation.

Conclusion

(I) If critical theory is truly committed to the transformation of society, it needs to provide a normative framework able to distinguish between the emancipatory and the repressive potentials of human reality. As a species capable of emancipation, we are able to create both individual and collective forms of empowerment. As a species capable of domination, we are able to generate both individual and collective forms of disempowerment. To be sure, it is far from clear what the species-constitutive features of humanity are; it *is* clear, however, that their significance for the construction of social existence needs to be explored if we aim to understand the unique resources of the human world. Inasmuch as the realisation of our species-specific potentials is a source of self-actualisation, the repression of these potentials is a source of self-alienation.

(II) From a Habermasian point of view, the constitution of power relations is inextricably linked to the constitution of communicative relations. The more a given society succeeds in enhancing its members' *deliberative* power, the more it contributes to the creation of autonomous social relations. The more a given society is shaped by its *systemic* power, the more it is characterised by the creation of heteronomous social

relations. According to the Habermasian architecture of the social, then, the communicative nature of the lifeworld is diametrically opposed to the instrumental nature of the system: whereas the former allows for the normative regulation of society based on subjects' communicative autonomy, the latter leads to the gradual colonisation of society resulting in subjects' structural heteronomy. Insofar as the lifeworld permits us to engage in the quotidian exercise of communicative action and thereby develop a sense of locality, solidarity, and identity, it constitutes the cornerstone of social emancipation. Insofar as the system compels us to function in accordance with the colonising principle of instrumentality, it represents a major source of social domination.

(III) Knowledge and human interests cannot be separated from one another because they depend on one another: just as the production of knowledge is necessarily interest-laden, human interests are pursued through the construction of knowledge. Our technical cognitive interest in *controllability*, our practical cognitive interest in *comprehensibility*, and our emancipatory cognitive interest in *criticisability* are indicative of our existential interest in the collective construction of humanity. Our technical orientation towards instrumentality permits us to preserve ourselves as a *purposive* species, our practical orientation towards intersubjectivity allows us to coordinate our lives as a *communicative* species, and our emancipatory orientation towards reflexivity equips us with the capacity to liberate ourselves as a *contemplative* species. As controlling entities, we act *upon* the world (*Weltbearbeitung*); as comprehending entities, we act *with* the world (*Weltverarbeitung*); and, as critical entities, we act *beyond* the world (*Welterarbeitung*). Our will to control, comprehend, and critique the world cannot be divorced from our will to reason: we have developed the *teleological capacity* to act upon the world by virtue of *purposive reason*; we have acquired the *social capacity* to act with the world by virtue of *communicative reason*; and we have obtained the *critical capacity* to act beyond the world by virtue of *reflective reason*.

(IV) In order to do justice to the self-constitutive nature of the human species, we need to shed light on the anthropological specificity of the human subject. Every entity capable of speech and action is at the same time a (i) transcendental, (ii) cultural, (iii) cognitional, (iv) moral, and (v)

dialogical subject. (i) As a *transcendental* subject, the human species can mobilise its self-formative potentials in order to transform the conditions of its worldly immanence. (ii) As a *cultural* subject, the human species can create a social world beyond the natural world, thereby immersing itself in the distinctiveness of its own existence. (iii) As a *cognitional* subject, the human species can exploit the empowering resources of work, language, and power to embrace the purposive, communicative, and reflective conditions of its own universe. (iv) As a *moral* subject, the human species can convert its own existence into an object of contemplation and develop a sense of autonomy and responsibility. (v) As a *dialogical* subject, the human species can use the power of linguisticality to construct spheres of sociality based on the normative force of mutual intelligibility. In short, a species capable of self-formation is a species capable of self-emancipation.

(V) An emancipatory theory of the human subject needs to identify the emancipatory resources of society in order to account for the emancipatory potentials of humanity. From Habermas's communication-theoretic perspective, the main emancipatory resource of society is communicative action, that is, our rational capacity to reach mutual understanding. As a species capable of speech and action, we have developed our *Verstand* (reason) through the coexistential exercise of *Verständigung* (communication), which is – at least in principle – always oriented towards *Einverständnis* (agreement). Given our existential orientation towards understanding and consensus, the formal qualities of the ideal speech situation are anticipated by the presuppositions of ordinary linguistic communication: only by making an – implicit or explicit – effort to understand one another can we succeed in constructing a coexistential situation which permits us to live with one another. Put differently, the communicational and consensual nature of linguisticality emanates from the coexistential condition of society. In essence, the ideal speech situation constitutes a real speech situation as it forms – always and unavoidably – part of ordinary communicative encounters. The emancipatory nature of ideal speech manifests itself in five levels of power. (1) Its *discursive* power enables the subjects to determine the constitution and evolution of society by virtue of critical reasoning. (2) Its *anticipatory* power is reflected in the fact that even in the most repressive forms of society, which produce systematically distorted forms of

communication, the emancipatory potential of communicative action continues to exist, for no society can possibly do without a minimum of linguistic intelligibility. (3) Its *ordinary* power is due to the fact that, in principle, every subject capable of speech and action – regardless of its social authority and linguistic legitimacy – can participate in the collective realisation of consensual deliberation. (4) Its *foundational* power implies that there are no emancipatory forms of socialisation without emancipatory forms of communication, since empowering frameworks of human coexistence depend on communicative processes of mutual agreement. (5) Its *normative* power suggests that the disempowering situation of social domination can be measured against the empowering condition of ideal communication.

(VI) An emancipatory theory of the human subject needs to uncover the repressive resources of society if it seeks to account for the repressive potentials of humanity. Whilst, according to Habermas, communicative action is the key emancipatory resource of society, the distortion of communicative processes is a crucial indicator of the establishment of human relations which undermine, or even obstruct, the unfolding of the empowering potentials inherent in action oriented towards reaching an understanding. Although, as a species capable of speech and action, we have developed our *Verstand* (reason) through the coexistential exercise of *Verständigung* (communication), our linguistic interactions are not always oriented towards *Verständnis* (understanding) or *Wahrhaftigkeit* (truthfulness) but can also be aimed at *Mißverständnis* (misunderstanding) or *Täuschung* (deceptiveness). The deceptive nature of systematically distorted communication is reflected in its multifaceted power. (1) Its *distortive* power stems from our capacity to shape the development of society in accordance with concealed strategic motives and perpetuated systemic imperatives. (2) Its *reproductive* power confirms the suspicion that the more we engage in the production of systematically distorted communication, the more we contribute to the reproduction of social domination. (3) Its *performative* power demonstrates that every subject capable of speech and action is also capable of speech and deception and, therefore, able to generate distortive forms of communication. (4) Its *parasitic* power is due to its ontological dependence on non-distortive – i.e. understanding-oriented – forms of social action, for the coordinative force of communicative action always

remains preponderant over the corrosive force of systematic distortion. (5) Its *normative* power obliges us to explore the damaging effects of deceptive communication and the pathological consequences of systemic colonisation.

(VII) Whereas Habermas's belief in the necessity and possibility of human emancipation is epitomised in the concept of the ideal speech situation, his analysis of human domination cannot be dissociated from the concept of systematically distorted communication. The former is founded on the understanding-oriented force of communicative action; the latter, by contrast, is symptomatic of the utility-driven force of strategic action. To be sure, it is not *open* but *concealed* strategic action which lies at the heart of systematically distorted communication. Deception is a constitutive component of distortive forms of intelligibility, just as domination is a central element of repressive forms of society. Whenever one of the fundamental validity claims inherent in linguistic communication is surreptitiously violated without an interruption in communication or a transition to overtly pronounced strategic action, the internal organisation of speech is disrupted and the external relation between speakers is distorted. In other words, if the validity basis of speech is secretly curtailed, systematically *organised* communication is replaced by systematically *distorted* communication. A communication-theoretic account of the social which claims to be realistic, rather than idealistic, needs to recognise that subjects capable of speech and action are not only subjects capable of speech and reflection but also subjects capable of speech and deception. Just as our speech acts can be oriented towards truth, rightness, truthfulness, and understanding, they can be oriented towards falsehood, inappropriateness, deceitfulness, and misunderstanding.

The sociological power of communicative action is due to subjects' *coordinative* capacity, which allows for the possibility of a *consensually* regulated society. The sociological power of concealed strategic action is due to subjects' *deceptive* capacity, which allows for the possibility of a *distortedly* steered society. A realistic, rather than idealistic or fatalistic, theory of the social needs to account for both the binding force of communicative action and the misleading force of concealed strategic action if it seeks to understand not only the coordinative and constructive,

but also the deceptive and destructive potentials of the social. Every time we engage in communicative action we presuppose the possibility of an ideal speech situation, which is indicative of the emancipatory power intrinsic to mutual understanding and genuine agreement; and every time we engage in concealed strategic action we reinforce the possibility of systematically distorted communication, which is symptomatic of the repressive power inherent in deception and delusion.

Given the *discursive* power of ideal speech, we are able to discuss and weigh up our thoughts and motives; given the *deceptive* power of distorted speech, we are able to conceal them. Due to the *anticipatory* power of ideal speech, emancipatory life forms are always already present in communicative speech acts; due to the *reproductive* power of distortive speech, repressive life forms are unavoidably perpetuated by deceptive speech acts. Drawing on the *ordinary* power of ideal speech, we can rely on the quotidian ubiquity of mutual comprehension; drawing on the *performative* power of distortive speech, we need to face up to the mundane frequency of mutual deception. In light of the *foundational* power of ideal speech, we need to recognise that emancipatory forms of socialisation presuppose emancipatory forms of communication; in light of the *parasitic* power of distortive speech, we need to acknowledge that the corrosive force of systematic distortion is parasitic upon the coordinative force of communicative action. The *normative* power of ideal speech enables us to appreciate the empowering nature of truthful deliberation; the *normative* power of distortive speech, by contrast, compels us to uncover the damaging effects of deceptive communication. In short, we need to account for both the emancipatory and the repressive potentials of language if we seek to understand both the empowering and the disempowering potentials of the communicative subject.

Pli 19 (2008), 111-137

Two Studies in Wittgenstein's Subject:

A) Solipsism and Realism; B) Ordinary Language and Pain

ANDREW STEPHENSON

It is often thought that there are two Wittgensteins: the author of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, and the author of the *Philosophical Investigations*.[1] Now of course, thus stated, this view is hopelessly simplistic – indeed so much so that it might reasonably seem to be at best entirely uninformative and at worst straightforwardly false – but let us suppose that various modifications and elaborations are available that can render it less vulnerable to the more obvious objections and counter-instances. Then where would we be? Well, muddying the waters just makes them murky. We would have a subtle, greatly enriched conception of Wittgenstein's philosophical development – indeed one that may well itself bare only a family resemblance to the picture with which we started – and yet it would still be highly controversial. But then perhaps that is the best we can hope for, and it is certainly far more than I aim at here.

1 The works by Wittgenstein that will be referred to are the following: *On Certainty*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe and D. Paul, eds. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), hereafter *OC*; *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. B. F. McGuiness and D. F. Pears (London: Routledge, 2002), hereafter *TLP*, references to its propositions are kept within the main text; *Philosophical Investigations* (3rd edn.), trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), hereafter *PI*; *Notebooks* (2nd edn.), eds. G. H. Von Wright and G. E. M. Anscombe (trans.) (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), hereafter *NB*; *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology, vol. 1*, eds. G. E. M. Anscombe (trans.), and G. H. von Wright (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), hereafter *RPP* I; *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology, vol. 2*, trans. C. G. Luckhardt and M. A. E. Aue, eds. G.H. Von Wright and H. Nyman (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), hereafter *RPP* II; *The Blue and Brown Books* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1975), hereafter *BB*; *Philosophical Remarks*, trans. R. Hargreaves and R. White, ed. R. Rhees (Oxford: Blackwell, 1964), hereafter *PR*.

What I aim at here is simply to make a small contribution to the aforementioned enrichment. I want to muddy the waters, but at the same time I want strongly to suggest that we are at least swimming in the right waters. With this very general project in mind, and with it implicit throughout all that follows, let us turn to particulars.

Wittgenstein, both early and late, has much to say on the notion of subjectivity, and, more specifically, on the notion of the subject itself. The two studies that follow both relate to what we might metaphorically call the extension of the subject – the extent to which, if at all, the subject pervades the world. 'The world' here is to be understood broadly, so as to include both objects and other subjects. Thus, put crudely, it is the concern of the first study to show why the early Wittgenstein maintained that the subject, properly conceived as a subject fit for philosophical study, *necessarily pervades completely the objective realm*; and it is the concern of the second study to show why the later Wittgenstein maintained that the subject, properly conceived as a subject fit for philosophical study, *does not necessarily not pervade completely the other subject*. Clearly, the two projects will be linked in philosophically significant ways. And yet, equally clearly, the two projects will be distinct in methodologically significant ways. But what I also want to argue, and what is far less clear, is that they are distinct in a single key philosophically significant way, namely as regards the relationship between the world and the subject's logic (as the early Wittgenstein might put it) or grammar (as the later Wittgenstein might put it). For the author of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* it is a foundational premise, an absolutely central axiom, that the logic of the subject, being the only possible logic, pervades the world. For the author of the *Philosophical Investigations*, on the other hand, it is just as much a foundational premise, just as much an axiom, if anything can count as such in this framework, that there is an unbridgeable gap between the subject's grammar, being merely one possible grammar among many, and the world it inhabits.

Study (A) Solipsism and Realism

The way in which solipsism is a truth provides the key to Wittgenstein's understanding of the metaphysical subject. Only together do these

provide the key to his belief in the coincidence of solipsism and realism (cf. 5.64). For this coincidence requires the reconciliation of seemingly opposite claims regarding both the ontological dependence of the world and the limits of our representation of it. Therefore, in A.I-A.IV I will offer an interpretation and detailed exposition of 5.61-5.62. In A.I I will set out an argument that leads to the solipsist's equation of *the* world with *my* world and briefly comment on the validity of this argument. In A.II and A.III I will argue for the truth of the premises (from the point of view of *TLP*). Given the way in which this shows that "what the solipsist *means* [*meint*] is quite correct" (5.62[2]), we will see that the solipsist's replacement of the definite article with the pronoun can introduce no new logical restriction on representation whatsoever, and the solipsistic description of the world can be identical with the realistic. I will consolidate this conclusion in A.IV. These sections will lay much necessary groundwork and suggest a way of interpreting, in A.V, the key remarks in the 5.63's. Only then will a full understanding of 5.64 be available.

A.I

The argument of 5.61-5.62 can be formulated like so:

(i) The limits of the world are the limits of logic
(ii) The limits of logic are the limits of language
(iii) The limits of the world are the limits of language (from (i) and (ii))
(iv) The limits of my language are the limits of my world
(v) The limits of language are the limits of my language
(vi) The limits of language are the limits of my world (from (iv) and (v))
(vii) The limits of the world are the limits of my world (from (iii) and (vi))
(vii')The world is my world (from (vii))

In each case the binary relation is one of equivalence.[2] Barring other problems, such as equivocation, this relation validates the inferences that lead to (vii).

Moreover, it is an internal relation. If relata are internally related, then they would not be the same items if they were not so related. So the claim I am attributing to Wittgenstein in (i), for example, might be put like so: if the limits of the world were not also the limits of logic, they would not even be the limits of the world. In the same way, a limit, in the sense in which Wittgenstein uses the term '*Grenze*' in *TLP*, is essentially connected to what it limits. The limits of logic, the world, and language, for example, are each wholly determined by the essential nature or form of what they limit.[3] If what sets those limits is different, then they are different. And conversely, if what sets those limits is the same, then so are they. This relation validates the inference from (vii) to (vii`).[4]

A.II

As regards soundness the matter is much less straightforward. I derive (i), that the limits of the world are the limits of logic, from 5.61[1]:

> Logic pervades the world: the limits of the world are also its limits.

Here 'the world' means not "all that is the case" (1) but rather something that is manifest in "the totality of elementary propositions" (5.5561[1]).

2 With the exception of the inference to (vii`), the argument as it is formulated here relies for its validity on transitivity only. I have formulated it like this because it best fits the text.

3 Wittgenstein held in *TLP* that any attempt to describe essence, or to state the relations between essences as I do in the above argument, inevitably results in nonsense (*unsinnig*). It is not within the scope of this study to address this enormous issue.

4 And it validates any parallel move that instantiates the following schema (or its reverse):

(n) R(the limits of x)(the limits of y)

(n`) Rxy

I will often make unsignposted use of this move; i.e. I will slide from talk of limits to talk of what is limited and back again.

For what is the case (what states of affairs happen to actually obtain) is a contingent matter, whereas what might possibly be the case, the range of all possible configurations of simple objects, is not, and logic is firmly restricted to the non-contingent. To put this point in terms of relations, only this interpretation of what 'the world' means here grants the relation between it and logic (and the limits thereof) symmetry. If the concept of the world being used here were a concept of something contingent, then although in a sense it would be limited by logic, since its form would still be dictated by logic although its content would not, the converse would not hold. Logic would not be limited by the world since false propositions are beyond the limits of what is (contingently) the case but not beyond the limits of logic. So the concept of the world being used here is not that of something contingent. As Kenny (1993:109) puts it, commenting on 5.552, "Logic depends on there being something in existence and there being facts; it is independent of what the facts are, of things being thus and so." The limits of things being thus and so, the limits of the *actual* facts, are *not* the limits of logic. However, the limits of the *possible* facts *are* the limits of logic.[5]

Before moving on to discuss 5.61[4] (from which I derive (ii)), a word must be said regarding the remarks in-between. Take 5.61[2] first:

> So we cannot say in logic, 'The world has this in it, and this, but not that.'

Black (1964:308) interprets 'this, but not that' as denoting objects as opposed to facts, and cites 4.1272[5] as evidence regarding the "impossibility of speaking about the existence of objects." Hintikka (1958:89) interprets the proscription in light of 5.552 and 5.557, and points out that "Questions of this kind are only decided by the application of logic, and this application cannot be anticipated by purely logical means." Both of these suggestions are *prima facie* plausible, for what they say, regarding simple objects and logic respectively, is entirely correct. However, neither interpretation well explains the remark that immediately follows, (5.61[3]):

5 See D. Pears, 'Wittgenstein's Treatment of Solipsism', in *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Critical Assessments, vol. 1*, ed. S. Shanker (London: Croom Helm, 1986), p. 176 and S. Schroeder, *Wittgenstein: the Way Out of the Fly-Bottle* (London: Polity, 2006), p. 95, for interpretations similar to the notion of 'the world' that is being invoked here.

> For that would appear to presuppose that we were excluding certain possibilities, and this cannot be the case, since it would require that logic should go beyond the limits of the world; for only in that way could it view those limits from the other side as well.

The alternative interpretation that I offer, which is equally *prima facie* plausible but which also explains this subsequent remark, is that Wittgenstein means we cannot say in logic (taking this turn of phrase lightly, since we do not *say* anything in logic) that there is this possibility, and this possibility, but not that possibility. To try to do so would be to mistake the concept of the *limits* of logic, from which nothing is excluded, for the (incoherent) concept of the *limitations* of logic. The latter would be a contrastive notion – distinguishing what falls within from what falls without – but in the context of *TLP* and its conception of logic such a notion makes no sense. This can only support my reading of 'the world' in 5.61[1].

Moving on, I derive (ii), that the limits of logic are the limits of language, from 5.61[4]:

> We cannot think what we cannot think; so what we cannot think we cannot *say* either.

This is a recapitulation of what Wittgenstein has already said on the one hand concerning the relation of propositions to thoughts, and on the other hand how they are both subject to the constraints of the picture theory of representation (specifically what is said about this theory in the 2.1's). First, "A logical picture of facts is a thought" (3) and "In a proposition a thought finds an expression that can be perceived by the senses" (3.1). As far as logic is concerned, then, a thought and a proposition are just the same kinds of thing.[6]

So just as "Thought can never be of anything illogical," (3.03) nor can a proposition. The limits of logic are the limits of language. For language is the system of representation by which propositions (and thoughts) have the meaning they do through their *logical* picturing of (their sharing of *logico*-pictoral form with) concatenations of simple objects. A proposition (thought) and a fact are strictly isomorphic, and a fact cannot

6 Cf. also *NB*, § 82 and 130.

be illogical, since we have already seen that the limits of the world are the limits of logic. (If we just add that elementary propositions are thus entirely comprised of logically proper names for these simple objects, and that complex propositions are truth-functions of elementary propositions, we come full circle to 5, upon which 5.6, and ultimately the 5.6's with which we are here concerned, comment.)

And (iii), that the limits of the world are the limits of language, is entailed by the conjunction of (i) and (ii).

A.III

I derive (iv), straightforwardly, from 5.6:

> *The limits of my language* mean the limits of my world.

We have already established in A.II that the notion of the world at work in 5.61 is that of the range of all possible worlds. Nothing about the notion of *my* world in 5.6 follows from this fact alone. One initially plausible interpretation of this notion is again as that of a contingently determined set of facts. But this time, whether a given fact is a member of this set depends merely on whether I happen to have experienced it, which is just to say that it depends on whether I have correlated names with objects in such a way that I might have a logical picture of the relevant state of affairs. In this way the objects I happen to have experienced – my world – limit the propositions I am able to express in my particular sign-language – my language, English.[7] If this were the correct interpretation then the inference to (vi) from (iv) and (v) would either be invalid due to equivocation, or at least one of its premises would be false, namely (v).

However, that this is not the correct interpretation is strongly suggested by the fact that 5.6 is, according to the numbering system of *TLP*, a comment on 5, and indeed it is a comment on 5 that Wittgenstein has chosen to place after at least five other such comments. But 5-5.5 are all broadly concerned with the construction of complex propositions from

7 I take something like this to be the interpretation of 5.6 that Hacker opts for (P.M.S. Hacker, *Insight and Illusion: Wittgenstein and the Metaphysics of Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 102).

elementary ones (via the successive application of the operation of joint negation). This is the work that results in the general form of the proposition, pronounced in 6 and expounded in the 6.0's (which in turn shows in the 6.1's how logical 'propositions', such as tautologies, are empty of content and therefore without sense (*sinnlos*)). The point is, it is not work much concerned with contingency.

Rather we should take Wittgenstein to be observing that, given what has gone before regarding the nature of representation – particularly that "A picture represents a possible situation in logical space" (2.202) and that "A proposition determines a place in logical space" (3.4) – the introduction of the pronoun in these cases – where we are concerned with the limits of language and the world – sets no logical restrictions whatsoever. For all logical spaces, by their very nature and the nature of my thought, are potentially available to me (and thus to my world and language).

This is very closely linked to the issues regarding (v), that the limits of language are the limits of my language, which I derive from part of 5.62[3]:

> ...the limits of *language* (of that language which alone I understand)...

Clearly this is understandable already given what was said immediately above. If, that is, we take the parenthetical *der Sprache* to refer to the same general notion of 'my language' as I argued occurred in 5.6.[8] However, it will be very useful to see that Wittgenstein's position here can be further understood in light of his response to Russell's position, particularly as regards solipsism, but also more generally as regards logic,

8 It is at least clear, contra Anscombe (G. E. M. Anscombe, *An Introduction to Wittgenstein's* Tractatus (London: Hutchinson, 1959), p. 166), that it does not refer to any kind of logically private language. Cf. C. Lewy, 'A Note on the Text of the Tractatus', *Mind* 76:303, (1967), pp. 419-20; E. Stenius, *Wittgenstein's* Tractatus (Oxford: Blackwell, 1960), p. 221; D. Pears, *The False Prison: a study of the development of Wittgenstein's philosophy, vol.1* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 173; Hacker (1989), p. 102 et. al.

language, and metaphysics.[9] This will lay some necessary groundwork for understanding the coincidence of solipsism and realism.

For Russell, each person's direct acquaintance is necessarily limited to a very few particulars (primarily her private sense-data) and universals. This requires him to admit the threat, in the form of its logical possibility, of solipsism. This is a threat Russell overcomes by utilising a distinction between knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description. Although a person can only have knowledge by acquaintance of her own private sense-data (etc.), she can have knowledge by description, most importantly of many other particulars, by inference. Thus by inductively inferring the existence of various objects the solipsist supposedly denies exist, Russell shows that the solipsist is probably wrong – solipsism is probably false. Russell can effect the crucial inference because his judgement – in the form of the disguised definite description 'The solipsist's sensation hurts' – indirectly denotes the same object the solipsist's judgement – 'This hurts' – directly denotes, namely the private sense-datum.

It is clear here that Russell's response to the solipsist relies on his theory of descriptions, whereby a judgement like, 'The leader of the Liberal Democrats is old', is analysed thus:

> $\exists x(((x$ is leader of the Liberal Democrats) & $\forall y(y$ is leader of the Liberal Democrats $\rightarrow y = x))$ & (x is old))

Wittgenstein acknowledges Russell's achievement in this analysis as showing that "Language [ordinarily] disguises thought" (4.002[4]). But for Wittgenstein, an analysis of a proposition could continue until it

9 In what follows I mean Russell's position circa 1913, particularly as exemplified in *The Problems of Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982). This method of comparison is pursued in Pears (1986). More recently Diamond has reinvigorated it (C. Diamond, 'Does Bismark have a Beetle in his Box? The private language argument in the *Tractatus*', in *The New Wittgenstein*, eds. A. Crary, and R. Read (London: Routledge, 2000)), and McGinn has followed (M. McGinn, *Elucidating the* Tractatus (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006)). McGuiness offers plentiful biographical evidence that Russell is somehow relevant to a proper understanding of Wittgenstein's intentions in the 5.6's (B. McGuiness, "Solipsism' in the *Tractatus*', in *Wittgensteinian Themes: essays in honour of David Pears*, eds. D. Charles, and W. Child (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) pp. 1-11). This is just what I grant by seeing Russell's (negative) influence at precisely this point.

becomes completely clear that the "elements of the propositional sign correspond to the objects of the thought" (3.2). That this is not the case in Russell's analyses goes to the heart of the difference between his and Wittgenstein's views. For Russell: "*Every proposition which we can understand must be composed wholly of constituents with which we are acquainted.*"[10] So, crucially, his response to the solipsist relies not only on the theory of descriptions *per se*, but also on the possibility of being acquainted with the logical objects – quantifiers and connectives – involved in the analyses his theory of descriptions produces.

But first of all, this is incoherent given the so-called *Grundgedanke* of *TLP*, whereby there simply are no logical objects with which to be acquainted (cf. 4.0312, 4.441, 5.4). No completely analysed proposition (no thought) contains a name whose meaning is any such so-called logical object. And second of all, Russell requires there to be a logical relation between his judgement and the solipsist's. Specifically he thinks the former follows from the latter. But on Wittgenstein's view, if a person can understand the logical relations a proposition has, then she can understand the proposition itself – understanding a proposition and understanding its place in logical space are reciprocal notions. We might put the difference like this: Russell is using the notion of a limit in the same way – he is not mistaking it for that of a limitation – but for him the limits of *language* are different to the limits of *my* language, since *my* language cannot directly access another's private experience whilst *some* language certainly can, namely that of the person to whom the private experience belongs. For Wittgenstein on the other hand, the pronoun can carry no such restriction – such a restriction is unintelligible – and the limits of language *tout court* are just the limits the language which alone I understand: my language.

And (vi), that the limits of language are the limits of my world, is entailed by the conjunction of (iv) and (v). This in conjunction with (iii), that the limits of the world are the limits of language, entails (vii), that the limits of the world are the limits of my world, which we saw in I is just to say (vii`), that the world is my world.

10 Russell (1982), p. 32.

A.IV

What the solipsist means that is quite correct, then, is not anything to do with the ontological dependence of the world on the subject. Nor is it that other minds do not exist, for we will see that to say this can only be misleading. Rather it is simply that *the* limits for the representation of *the* world are just *my* limits for the representation of *my* world. But it would be mistaken, for the solipsist or anyone else, to assume that this somehow imposes a restriction. This would lead us to read the equation of the world with the solipsist's world from right to left, as it were – as though *the* world were *reduced* to *her* world. But on the solipsist's own correct conclusion it makes no sense to assume that the limits of her possible experience are restricted. For if the world is her world, what are they restricted from? It is surely not possibilities that fall beyond the limits of her world (and the world), for anything that fell outside these limits would not even be a possibility. To (try to) say otherwise is just to mistake the notion of a limit for the notion of a limitation. It is to succumb to the temptation to (try to) think of something as being beyond the limits. Therefore the limits of representation are, for the solipsist, identical to those of the realist.

It will be efficacious in this consolidating paragraph (and only here) to make explicit the distinction between the notions of worlds I outlined above. The $world_1$ is all that is the case. My $world_1$ is all that is the case that I happen to have been aware of. The $world_2$ is all that might have been the case, the range of all possible states of affairs. My $world_2$ is the range of all states of affairs possible for me. (I have and will continue to be concerned primarily with the latter two of these notions.) Realism is not meant to denote a complex metaphysical theory, but rather what might be called the common-sense[11] or traditional[12] view. Reality, or the $world_1$, really contains such things as objects, definitely including medium sized dry goods such as human bodies and very probably including things like the particles described by modern science. These things are ordered in space and in time. Insofar as the $world_1$ also contains such things as human subjects, only a limited number of the objects it

11 W. Child, 'Solipsism and First Person/Third Person Asymmetries', *European Journal of Philosophy*, 4:2, (1996), p. 138.

12 D. Bell, 'Solipsism and Subjectivity', *European Journal of Philosophy*, 4:2, (1996), p. 162.

contains are available to view by such a subject at any one time. But this is just a fact about human experience. The $world_1$ is a proper part of the $world_2$. If, then, the $world_2$ is my $world_2$, as the solipsist maintains, the $world_1$ will also be a proper part of my $world_2$. An accurate account of the $world_1$ is equally available to an inhabitant of *the* $world_2$ as it is to an inhabitant of *my* $world_2$. Of course Wittgenstein does not deny that both the solipsist and the realist may each only be able to accurately describe things that are presented to them for comprehension. Indeed it might so happen that the actual experiences (the my $worlds_1$, as it were) of a particular solipsist and a particular realist never actually coincide. But as far as this is a restriction at all, it is contingent and common to both positions. It remains the case that the possibilities for their descriptions of the world – their limits of representation, their $worlds_2$ – do coincide.

A.V

But this in itself is not a full account of the coincidence of solipsism and realism. For it says nothing about the ontological independence or otherwise of the world. However, given what has been said in I in order to establish the way in which solipsism is a truth, we can very quickly construct such an account. First take 5.632:

> The subject does not belong to the world: rather, it is a limit of the world.

From this I derive:

(viii)The limits of the world are the limits of the metaphysical subject

Prima facie this might seem a very odd claim. It might seem more plausible to claim that the limits of *thought* are the limits of the metaphysical subject. But given what has been said above these two claims amount to precisely the same thing. For the world is essentially thinkable. It is essentially pervaded by logic and thereby language and thought. A thought, the sensible expression of which is a proposition, is a logical picture of a state of affairs. The limits of language are manifest in the totality of logical pictures. This is prior to truth-valuation. What

allows for the possibility of false propositions and incorrect thoughts is the fact that there can be logical pictures of states of affairs that do not obtain. So in language and thought the subject can represent any possible state of affairs, whether or not it obtains, and the range of all possible states of affairs just is the world that is the concern of (viii).

To attempt to place restricted limits on the range of experience or thought that is possible for the metaphysical subject *who is identified with the totality of thoughts*, to attempt to determine that the limits of the subject's language are more restricted than the limits of language *tout court*, must inevitably fail in the way that Russell's parallel attempt did. The world and the totality of thoughts share their limits.

But what justifies identifying the metaphysical subject with the totality of thoughts? First of all, Wittgenstein is not concerned with what contingently limits the subject, for this would only be relevant to an investigation of the empirical subject, and this is a matter for psychology. The sense in which philosophy can talk about the subject is only, then, as regards its necessary limits. But the only such limits the subject has are the limits of the world itself. For no *part* of our *experience* is *a priori* (cf. 5.634). So the necessary limits – that which *is a priori* – must be in place prior to any particular experience. And here we must look to the logical limits of the world rather than to reality as it actually happens to be. Alongside the world, logic, language, my language, and my world, then, we may now place the metaphysical subject. Correctly understood, these are all reciprocal notions. Finally, we can see why Wittgenstein must conclude that solipsism coincides with realism even as regards their apparently irreconcilable claims about ontological dependence.

When the solipsist claims that the world depends for its existence on the metaphysical subject, she claims only that it depends for its existence on itself, for the metaphysical subject *is* the world (cf. 5.63). And as Bell points out, the rest is a formality: "to say of something that it depends on itself is not to deny its independence; and to say of something that it depends *only* on itself is, precisely, to assert its independence."[13] Thus "The self of solipsism shrinks to a point without extension, and there remains the reality co-ordinated with it" (5.64).[14]

13 Ibid., p. 162.

14 There is much controversy over how to take the echoes of Schopenhauer that occur primarily in the 5.63's, and subsequently how to further construe Wittgenstein's position regarding the metaphysical subject, particularly as it relates to the will and

Study (B) Ordinary Language and Pain

According to the later Wittgenstein, the solipsist misconstrues the claim that 'Another person can't have my pains' as a metaphysical necessity, stating something true about the nature of the subject, sensations, and thereby the world. In doing this she projects grammar onto reality. This can be construed as the first step in the argument for solipsism, as it is in *TLP* (cf. A.I). If this step is illegitimate, then that argument lacks force. This is one way to describe some of the *general* background to Wittgenstein's treatment of the thesis that pains are essentially unsharable.[15] However, Wittgenstein's immediate response to the interlocutor's formulation of this thesis is itself very *specific* and warrants detailed attention. I will structure this study tightly around this response (I insert the sections in which I will deal with the corresponding remarks):

> 'Another person can't have my pains.' – [B.I-B.II] Which are *my* pains? What counts as a criterion of identity here? [B.II] Consider what makes it possible in the case of physical objects to speak of 'two exactly the same', for example, to say 'This chair is not the one you saw here yesterday, but it is exactly the same as it'.
>
> [B.III] In so far as it makes *sense* to say that my pain is the same as his, it is also possible for us both to have the same pain. ([B.II] And it would also be imaginable for two people to feel pain in the same – not just the corresponding – place. That might be the case with Siamese twins, for instance.)
>
> [B.IV] I have seen a person in a discussion on this subject strike himself on the breast and say: 'But surely another person can't have this pain!' – The answer to this is that one does not define a criterion of identity by emphatic stressing of the word 'this'. Rather, what the emphasis does is to suggest the case in which we are conversant with such a criterion of identity, but have to be reminded of it.[16]

ethics (cf. the 6.4's). The direction of my interpretation has allowed me to avoid this potential quagmire. Cf. Hacker (1989) and P.M. Sullivan, 'The 'Truth' in Solipsism, and Wittgenstein's Rejection of the A Priori', *European Journal of Philosophy*, 4:2, (1996), pp. 195-219 for contrasting views.

15 Another, perhaps more common way would be with reference to the so-called private language arguments and scepticism, but this would make the connections with the other study in this paper less explicit.

In B.I-B.IV I will argue that a main if often neglected theme here is that of the sheer variegation of word use displayed in language. This is a theme relentlessly recurrent in the indefatigable criss-crosses of *PI*, so it is not surprising that Wittgenstein will bring it to bear during this central portion of that work. There is much to be learnt about the subject here.

B.I

Wittgenstein introduces the problem in summary fashion: "We are up against trouble caused by our way of expression."[17] Our way of expression allows us to say 'I have a pain in my hand' just as we might say 'I have a copy of *PI* in my hand'; we say both 'This pain in my feet is the same one I had last time I went jogging' and 'These trainers on my feet are the same ones I had on last time I went jogging'. Thus a central temptation Wittgenstein is concerned to diagnose here is the temptation to project, wholesale, the grammar of our talk about physical objects – such as books and trainers – onto our talk about sensations – such as pains in our hands and feet.

Resisting this temptation will, according to Wittgenstein, help us to begin to dispel the cloud of philosophical confusion that shrouds the myth that our sensations are inner objects, intrinsic properties of which include being privately owned and privately known (the privacy here, like that of a private language in the requisite sense, is necessary).

We ascribe to our sensations the property of being essentially privately *known* because we illegitimately transport epistemological concepts from one language-game into another. The argument Wittgenstein develops[18] – drawing implicitly on themes of logical space and neighbours that are a constant refrain in all his writings – is that this transportation is illegitimate because whilst doubt has a place in the language-game of

16 *PI*, §253.
17 *BB*, § 48.
18 *PI*, § 246-52.

physical objects, it does not in the language-game of sensations; and where doubt does not have a place, knowledge does not have a place. This contentious argument is not our primary concern here, although connected issues will arise. More pressing is our ascription to our sensations the property of being essentially privately *owned*. One reason we might do this is if we perform a similar transportation with the concept of identity.

Exposing the illegitimacy of this latter transportation constitutes the first step in Wittgenstein's response to the claim that pains are essentially unsharable. However, the projection of the grammar of our objects-talk onto our sensations-talk is not in any way simply illegitimate because in the former case we have *this* criterion of identity and in the latter case we have *that*. For this does not sufficiently recognize the complexity of our language-games.[19] Thus a further, more general temptation Wittgenstein is concerned to diagnose and resist is the artificial idealisation of language-games in order that they might be analysed.[20] So, importantly, Wittgenstein's initial reaction to the interlocutor's claim is an *open* question about the grammar of the language-game: "What counts as a criterion of identity here?"[21] Perhaps at this point the logician will quip "identity is identity"[22], implying that the only context-dependent issue is how we happen to establish identity in certain cases; but after all, this is a question for the psychologist, not the philosopher.

It is not implausible to take the logician in question to be Frege. Not only is Frege's antipsychologism renowned and central to his thought,[23]

19 Cf. Ibid., § 23-4.

20 Cf. Ibid., § 22.

21 Here I follow Hacker's exegetical proposal that this question just reiterates the preceding one (P. M. S. Hacker, *Insight and Illusion: Themes in the Philosophy of Wittgenstein* (rev. edn.) (London: Thoemmes Press, 1997), p. 51). This becomes clearer if we reject the Anscombe translation of "Welches sind *meine* Schmerzen?" as "Which are *my* pains?", and replace it with "*My* pains – what are they supposed to be?". c.f. *RPP* II, § 149.

22 Cf. *PI*, § 377.

23 Cf. G. Frege, *The Frege Reader*, ed. Beaney, M. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p. 90, for example, where he lays down as his first fundamental principle the following: "There must be a sharp separation of the psychological from the logical, the subjective from the objective."

many of his views typify what Baker and Hacker[24] call the "Platonist fantasies" it is the purpose of *PI* to dissolve.[25] Of particular relevance is his doctrine of ideas (*Vorstellungen*). Pains are among our ideas, and as such they are inner and intangible, something we have, in need of an owner, and admit of only one such owner. Together these characteristics distinguish ideas from both objects in the external world and thoughts (which, immaterial yet unowned, reside in a third realm).[26] One *touches* a sharp object but one *has* a pain, just as one *sees* a meat cleaver but *has* a rectangular and silver visual impression. Two people can *touch* and *see* the same sharp meat cleaver, but they cannot *have* the same pain or visual impression.

This Fregean view of ideas (and pains specifically) is surely an example of the kind of view that is the target of Wittgenstein's response. First, it gives too much ground to the solipsist. Hence Frege is forced to say of "acknowledging other men to be owners of ideas" that "once given the possibility, the probability is very great."[27] In *PI* Wittgenstein cannot accept this inductive response to solipsism any more than he can in *TLP* (cf. I.iii in the first study). Second, Frege not only treats pains as inner objects, he also idealises for the sake of generalisation talk about outer objects as well. *Both* of these latter philosophical tendencies arise, ultimately, out of a certain lack of attention to (or respect for) the sheer variegation of word-use exhibited in ordinary language. It is *this* diagnosis, general as it is, that provides the key to Wittgenstein's response to the solipsistic claim that pains are unsharable.

24 G. P. Baker, and P. M. S. Hacker, *Frege: Logical Excavations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), p. 60.

25 Moreover, Frege (1997, p. 110) can be given credit for introducing the *terminology* 'criterion of identity', which is so central to Wittgenstein's discussion here. Dummett credits him with introducing the *concept* as well (M. Dummett, *Frege: Philosophy of Language* (London, Duckworth: 1973)), but Lowe resists this (E. J. Lowe, 'What is a Criterion of Identity?', *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 39:154, (1989), p. 2). Lowe also points out that the term Austin translates as 'criterion' is '*Kennzeichen*' whereas Wittgenstein uses '*Kriterium*'. This does not mean that Frege is not in the background here.

26 This account is derived from *Der Gedanke* (p. 67-8), but c.f. *Uber Sinn und Bedeutung* (pp. 29-30) and *Die Grundgesetze der Arithmetik* (p. XVIII-XIX) (all in Frege (1997)).

27 Frege (1997), p. 341.

B.II

Having asked his initial question, then, Wittgenstein suggests we consider the notion of being-exactly-the-same-as. It might seem that the implication here is that this notion is all the notion of identity between sensations amounts to. In our objects-talk we distinguish between the two notions by saying things like: "This jumper is not the one you saw me wearing this morning, but it is exactly the same as it". Wittgenstein's suggestion, on this reading, is that in our sensations-talk this distinction collapses – it is not accounted for by the grammar of that particular language-game.

The traditional distinction between qualitative and numerical identity is relevant here. In our objects-talk it makes sense to count an object as qualitatively identical but numerically distinct from another object. The projection of the grammar of this language-game onto that of sensations illegitimately transports this possibility. On this reading Wittgenstein thinks that, just as with our colours-talk, the distinction is illegitimate in the language-game of sensations because the notion of numerical identity has no application there.[28] We shall see that this reading, whilst it takes account of one apparent mistake – that of projecting wholesale the grammar of objects-talk onto sensations-talk – it fails to take account of another – that of artificially idealising our language-games.

But first, it remains tempting to think that the idea that the notion of numerical identity has no place in our sensations-talk is just false.[29] That is, it remains tempting to think the following conversation legitimate and illuminating, if a little pedantic:

A: 'Oh no! I've got the same stomach pain you had yesterday.'

28 This, in outline, is the reading proffered by Malcolm (N. Malcolm, 'The Privacy of Experience', in *Epistemology: New Essays in the Theory of Knowledge*, ed. A. Stroll (London: Harper & Row, 1967), pp. 129-158) and, variously qualified, altered, and improved, in Hacker (1997), as well as in P.M.S Hacker, *Wittgenstein: Meaning and Mind, vol. 3 of an analytical commentary on the* Philosophical Investigations, *part I: essays,* and also in *part II: exegesis* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), hereafter (1993a) and (1993b), respectively.

29 As Cavell notes, 'Knowing and Acknowledging', in *Must We Mean What We Say?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 244.

B: 'Surely you don't mean you have the *same* pain.'

A: 'Well no, of course, I just mean that I have a pain that *feels exactly the same* and is *in the same place*.'

However, if we examine the use of our words – if we describe the language-game constituted by our sensations-talk – we will see that, *in many cases at least*, the concession made by A comes to nothing. For in many cases there is nothing more to a pain than what it feels like and where it is. Wittgenstein observes: "How are toothaches to be distinguished from one another? By intensity and similar characteristics, and by location."[30] It might be tempting, then, to answer Wittgenstein's initial question by offering the following traditional schema for a criterion of identity for pain:

> If x is a pain and y is a pain, then x and y are identical iff x and y stand in the relation of having the same location and character.[31]

(We might cash-out the character of a pain by its intensity and its various other phenomenal characteristics.) Since this is not what we count as a criterion of identity for objects, it might seem that this takes heed of Wittgenstein's warnings about projecting grammar. But in fact this kind of answer – one that replaces one criterion of identity with another – is not at all what Wittgenstein means to provoke with his question. For if we examine our use of words we will see that the conditions specified by this definition are not *necessary*, although they may be *sufficient*.

First let us take location, for "We easily forget that the word 'locality' is used in many different senses".[32] We do not deny identity of location in the case of pains on the same grounds that we might do so for objects. In fact our entire way of speaking about the locality of pains is often quite different from our corresponding way of speaking about objects. Consider two claims, superficially akin: 'My pain is in my hand' and 'My hand is in my glove'. Placing the latter in conjunction with 'My glove is in my pocket' licenses the inference to 'My hand is in my pocket'. Placing the former in conjunction with 'My hand is in my pocket' does not license

30 *PR*, § 61.

31 $\forall x \forall y((Fx \,\&\, Fy) \rightarrow (x = y \leftrightarrow Rxy))$. Cf. Lowe (1989), p. 6.

32 *BB*, § 8.

any such inference to 'My pain is in my pocket'. This makes no sense: "Only of what behaves like a human being can one say that it *has* pains."[33] We might therefore generalise: the relation '...is in...', when it holds between physical objects, is transitive; the relation '...is in...', when it holds between pains, is not. In the case of objects, if x is in y and y is in z, then x is in z; this is not so for pains. Despite appearances to the contrary, then, the two relations are distinct.

By continuing to expose the differences between the language-games in this way, we might find a reason to suggest that locality *is* a suitable criterion of identity for pains, even though it is not for objects. One and the same glove can be taken off my hand and put in the drawer just as one and the same hand can be put into different gloves. Objects do not change their identity as they change location. I might even put my hand in a sock, but it makes scant sense to say that I might move the pain in my finger into my toe, or have a headache in my leg. However, from these examples it is still a considerable leap to the claim that a pain's location is even partly constitutive of its identity.

The problem here is first that language-games are so incredibly complex, and second that part of this complexity resides in the fact that they are not wholly distinct or independent. While it may well be a peculiarly philosophical mistake to project the whole of a grammar onto a discourse to which it does not belong, there is nevertheless some non-philosophical traffic between language-games – some natural, actual, and legitimate overlapping of grammars. For we *do* say things like 'My pain has moved from my stomach into my bowels', and 'My pain has spread from the front to the back of my head'. In neither case do we mean to imply that, therefore, we have a different pain.

Thus, *if* we follow Wittgenstein's method of describing the use of words through, identity of location is not a *necessary* condition for the identity of a pain. On the other hand, sometimes we *do* use locality to identify or distinguish between pains, and we might even say 'This is not the same pain I had earlier; although it feels the same it has now moved lower in my gut'. Locality might for all I have said contribute to a *sufficient* condition for the identification of a pain (although it could not alone constitute such a condition).

33 *PI*, § 283.

These considerations, which evidence and emphasise the variegation of language, suggest a way to understand Wittgenstein's example of Siamese twins. Hacker construes this example in terms of a misleading concession.[34] The interlocutor says that although two people might have a pain in the same place insofar as they both have a pain in their thumb, the pains are not *really* in the same place but only the *corresponding* place. On Hacker's reading, Wittgenstein seems to concede the point, but then cites the case of Siamese twins to show that even this does not stop the pains being in an identical, not just corresponding location (and therefore even this does not show that two people cannot have the same pain). Hacker thinks this is misleading because if, say, the head of one twin is conjoined to the back of the other twin, then, since one has a headache when the other has backache, we might equally say that their pains are *not* in the same place.[35]

On my reading, that we can imagine actual uses for both ways of talking about the location of the twins' pains is precisely Wittgenstein's point. It is not that in one case we have to "*make up* criteria"[36], for in a sense this is true in every case. Rather it is that ordinary language does not allow of a fully generalised schema for identifying pains via their locality.

Nevertheless, Wittgenstein does accept that the temptation to think otherwise – to think of locality as suitably central so as to count as a criterion of identity for pain in every case – is strong:

> Can one imagine a pain...*without* locality?...When you begin to think this over, you see how much you would like to change the knowledge of the place of pain into a characteristic [*Merkmal*] of... the private object that is there before my mind.[37]

But there are always going to be counter-examples that stop locality ever counting as a properly necessary condition for such a thing as the identity of a pain, crucially embedded as it is in our form of life.

34 Hacker (1993b), pp. 47-8.

35 Although cf. *BB*, § 54 for a science fiction version of the Siamese twin example.

36 N. Malcolm, 'The Privacy of Experience', in *Epistemology: New Essays in the Theory of Knowledge*, ed. Stroll, A. (London: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 145.

37 *RPP* I, § 440.

Now we can consider intensity and phenomenal character more briefly. The same issues arise. We can indeed distinguish different pains by noting the difference in their intensities ('This pain is mild whereas the one I had before I took my medicine was severe'). But equally we can observe that a pain – the same pain – might increase or decrease in intensity over time ('My pain is getting worse'). Thus nor is sameness of intensity a *necessary* condition for identity of pain. But again, it can contribute to a *sufficient* condition for that identity.

And we can distinguish different pains by noting the differences in the other phenomenal characteristics they are disposed to produce ('This pain is dull and throbbing whilst that pain is sharp'). Indeed, Wittgenstein admits that in certain cases "some characteristic of pain shows me its place."[38] In such cases the characteristics of the pain can seem very important, perhaps constitutive of identity. But equally we can observe an alteration in the phenomenal characteristics produced by a single pain ('My headache started as a vague throbbing but it has become unbearably acute').

An examination of our language-game does not provide us with the resources to define a criterion of identity for pain that holds universally, just as what we count as a criterion of identity for physical objects does not always hold as a criterion of identity for pains. (This does not preclude us decisively ruling *out* possible criteria. For example, it would stretch our concept of pain beyond breaking point to try and take what it smells like to be a criterion of its identity.)

B.III

What effect does all this have on the claim that 'Another person can't have my pains'? Well, 'in so far as it makes *sense* to say that my pain is the same as his, it is also possible for us both to have the same pain.' For all that has been said so far about the various ways we identify pains, nothing precludes the possibility of two people sharing the same pain. If, in a given case, we identify a pain by, say, its intensity and relative location, then this pain is a pain that can be had by two or more people. And, often enough, this *is* how we identify our pains. Strictly speaking

38 Ibid., § 767.

this is all Wittgenstein needs to falsify the thesis that pains are essentially unsharable.

Thus the disabling mistake in Malcolm's interpretation is that he takes Wittgenstein to be offering (even to require) what Mulhall calls the negation or reverse of the interlocutor's position.[39] But in order to make this reverse position tally with the facts of ordinary language usage, Malcolm introduces an artificial hierarchy. In order to account for the indisputable fact that, *sometimes*, and not only in philosophical conversation, we do seem to identify pains otherwise – namely by absolute location etc. – Malcolm suggests that we only do so in a secondary, not a primary, sense.[40] Imposing this distinction betrays Wittgenstein's project resolutely conceived; it idealises our language in order that it might be more amenable to philosophical analysis. Moreover, it is entirely unnecessary.

It is unnecessary not least because, even if we identify our pains by intensity and absolute location, for example, Wittgenstein insists that "It is conceivable that I feel pain in a tooth in another man's mouth."[41] Wittgenstein is protected on all fronts here. If it is true that we can indeed imagine the case he suggests (or if we can imagine the Siamese twins example in a certain way), then the identification of pains by their absolute location is unproblematic for their sharability. And if, on the other hand, we cannot imagine this case, then we are shown something about our concepts, not the world. If the idea of having a pain in another's body stretches the concept of 'a person's body' beyond breaking point, then, as Hacker says, "'I can't feel a pain in another person's body' expresses a grammatical proposition."[42] Namely that part of what we mean by a person's body is where she feels pains. This notion of a grammatical proposition needs to be explained, for another example of one can be the claim that is our central concern: 'Another person can't have my pains'.

39 S. Mulhall, *Wittgenstein's Private Language: Grammar, Nonsense, and Imagination in* Philosophical Investigations, §§243-315 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 69.

40 Malcom (1967) p. 157fn.

41 *BB*, § 49.

42 Hacker (1993a), p. 51.

A grammatical proposition is to be distinguished from an empirical one.[43] An empirical proposition says something about how the world is, and is, at least usually, either true or false. Thus the following says something false about the world: 'Another person can't play with my nephew's tractor'. It is false because my nephew is not at all selfish and will let anyone play with his tractor. Of course, this might have been otherwise. A grammatical proposition, if you will, *shows* something about how we represent the world, and so is neither true nor false. Grammatical propositions explain the meanings of words by describing our rules for their use. For Wittgenstein, many things count as grammatical propositions and they can take many forms. Most important here is the expression of a rule "whose form makes it look like an empirical proposition, but which is really a grammatical one".[44] Thus a proposition like 'Another person can't have my pains', whilst it may share its form with an empirical proposition about my nephew's willingness to share his toys, is in fact quite different. As a grammatical proposition it simply points out that *I*, not *you*, have *my* pains. But this says nothing informative or unique about sensations, since we might also point out that the pains *we* have are *our* pains and that *I* have *my* bicycle. These grammatical propositions are trivial. All they do is draw attention to the connection between pronouns and their possessive forms.

Given what Wittgenstein implies[45] about the connection between grammatical propositions and nonsense, we might mimic a famous earlier passage: "'Another person can't have my pains.' – In one way this is false, and in another nonsense."[46] It is false in so far as another person *can* have the same pains I have; and it is nonsense in so far as it is a simple facet of grammar that we call the pains *I* have, *my* pains.

B.IV

She who *still* wishes to maintain that pain is essentially unsharable might then offer a different criterion of identity for pain, one that has nothing to

43 This distinction is a closely connected development of Wittgenstein's (*BB,* § 49) earlier one between metaphysical and experiential propositions.

44 *PI,* § 251.

45 Ibid., § 252.

46 Ibid., § 246.

do with location or character. She might say, whilst pinching herself on the triceps, "Surely another person can't have *this* pain, for *this* pain is had by me". But is this a plausible criterion for the identity of pain? Kenny thinks not, for it makes the identity of the possessor of the pain part of the criterion for the identity of the pain itself.[47] *This* is where the analogy with colour is most pertinent. For in the case of colour it is clear that it is mistaken to say that one person's hair cannot be the same colour as another person's hair just because the first colour is that of the first person's hair whilst the second colour is that of the second person's hair. In the case of pains it is not *obvious* that this is mistaken, but making the owner of the pain a criterion for the identity of the pain does again render the claim that 'Another person can't have my pains' grammatical.

So this is *not* to say that we can rule out the legitimacy of using ownership as a criterion of identity of pain in certain specific cases. This, I take it, is what Wittgenstein means to portray when he continues: "what the emphasis does is to suggest the case in which we are conversant with such a criterion of identity, but have to be reminded of it." Again, Wittgenstein's point is not to dictate what does and what does not count as a criterion for the identity of a pain. He does not first allow a determinate criterion of identity for objects, then point out that this does not hold for pain, and *then* offer the correct determinate criterion for identity in this case. Rather he allows for cases in which the grammars of different language-games might merge, all the while pointing out that we need to be attendant to the details of each and every case. After all, according to Wittgenstein, the interlocutor's emphasis (or suggestion for an alternative criterion) does 'suggest the case in which…', which in turn suggests that there *is* a case to be suggested. There is a deep moral here not only for our understanding of the subject, but for our understanding of grammar.

General Conclusion

As will be clear from the way I explained in my first study why the early Wittgenstein believes that solipsism and realism coincide, the extent to which the philosophical system of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* is brought into doubt will track the extent of our doubt about this

47 A. Kenny, *Wittgenstein* (London: Penguin, 1993), p. 189.

coincidence. One pertinent way to proceed here is to briefly explore Wittgenstein's later notion of the autonomy of grammar. This notion undermines the very first premise of the argument that eventually led to solipsism and realism being shown to coincide on their two crucial aspects. According to the later Wittgenstein, logic does not pervade the world, or at least not in the way that the early Wittgenstein thought it did. Entering the issue this way brings to light an absolutely key philosophical difference between our 'two Wittgensteins', but it also allows us to see that whilst the author of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* was wrong to attempt a reconciliation of the disparate claims about the ontological dependence of the world, he was right, at least in the eyes of the author of the *Philosophical Investigations*, to reconcile the limits of their languages, for this latter insight prefigures the infamous later views on the relation between the inner and the outer.

Grammar plays a similar role in Wittgenstein's later philosophy as logic plays in his early philosophy. For the early Wittgenstein, investigations into the nature of logic, and all the things that come with such investigations, constitute the proper philosophical enterprise; and for the later Wittgenstein, a philosophical investigation just is a grammatical investigation.[48] But these two notions – of logic and grammar – are fundamentally different. For although they both must in a sense take care of themselves[49], the former can do so because its limits mirror those of the world, whilst the latter can do so precisely because it is autonomous from the world.

The autonomy or arbitrariness of grammar, however, should not be overstated. There is a particularly relevant sense in which grammar is autonomous from reality, but it does well to remember that there are various senses in which this does not make it arbitrary. Grammar is not arbitrary in the sense that it is unimportant, fickle, or subject to human whim.[50] Some grammatical rules might even be in a suitable sense natural because of how the world is. And yet grammar is autonomous, and to that extent arbitrary, in so far as it "is not accountable to any reality".[51]

The difference, then, between logic and grammar, might be put like so: logic is *justified* by its internal relation to the world, whereas grammar is

48 Cf. *PI*, § 90.
49 Cf. *TLP* 5.473; *NB*, § 2.
50 Cf. Hacker (1997), § 330.
51 *PG*, § 184.

autonomous to precisely the extent that prohibits this kind of justification. For grammar is not and cannot be justified in this sense. Our grammar is itself what determines how we apply the concept of justification. And for that matter, according to the later philosophy the "harmony between thought and reality"[52] is not guaranteed as the early Wittgenstein thought it was – by the strict isomorphism of propositions and facts – but rather by the fact that grammar determines our very concept of reality: the structures of reality are but "the shadows cast by grammar".[53] The later Wittgenstein condemned as deeply misguided our philosophical tendency to, again as Hacker puts it, "project grammar onto reality."[54] This is a tendency that received a full systematic expression in the early work.

But how does this affect the coincidence of solipsism and realism? More specifically, how does this affect the early Wittgenstein's attempt to reduce the solipsist's claim that the world depends for its existence on the metaphysical subject to the realist's claim that the world depends for its existence only on itself? Let us grant that he is right that the proper conception of the metaphysical subject is as the totality of thoughts, so that the limits of language are the limits of the subject. For these aspects are not directly affected by our reflections on the autonomy of grammar. However, if the limits of the world are no longer held to be the same as the limits of language, then nor can they be the same as the limits of the subject. And this is precisely what the autonomy of grammar entails, for grammar sets the limits to language, but is not itself strictly limited by the world (though there is a sense in which the world *suggests* to grammar a pragmatic form). But if the metaphysical subject is not the world (contra 5.63), then to hold that the world depends on that subject is to deny that the world is independent. As regards this aspect at least, the later Wittgenstein saw that the early Wittgenstein was wrong to believe that solipsism coincides with realism. Yet this is not at all incompatible with the early insight that the limits of my language are just the limits of language *tout court*. Therefore solipsism and realism can still coincide insofar as neither the solipsist nor the realist can represent to themselves anything that the other necessarily cannot. And indeed, nor is it at all incompatible with the later insight that, as it were, the boundaries of the subject are up in the air.

52 Ibid. § 162; *PI*, § 429.
53 Hacker (1997), p. 37.
54 Hacker (1989), p. 175.

Pli 20 (2009), 138-164

Response to Deleuze[1]

FRANÇOIS LARUELLE

Philosophical discussion is neither interesting nor perhaps even possible except towards the outside of thought: it is necessary to thank Deleuze for having said this so clearly and in such a rigorously founded manner. However, the other interest of this book, *What Is Philosophy?*[2], is to lay claim to philosophical naïveté in such an innocent and provocative way that it inevitably calls for the clarifications of anyone's ultimate presuppositions in their relation to philosophy: it pushes us into the corner and forces us to show our 'tricks.' Not only is it difficult to sustain this refusal of *disputatio* without failing when, in the same proportion, we recognise the essence of philosophy's 'guerilla warfare'—if not its 'war for laughs'—its agonistic style; but also, it is completely necessary to explain the abandonment of dispute and its reasons in the essence of thought and the real. The last residue of any critique of communication is to communicate the reasons for abandoning communication. Joking around without succumbing to the excesses of the 'communicational,' as our authors do, we risk passing off foolishness as truth by laying claim to philosophical faith or naïveté. Philosophy has never been a 'sermon on the mount' promising the 'beatitudes of thought' to idiots. At minimum, one would be wise to remember that philosophy, which passes for the paragon of dogmatism, is also that which inscribes communication and epistolary 'relation' in the essence of Being. But the example of Leibniz perhaps signifies that his concept and practice of communication are themselves dogmatic and destroy or reify themselves, as appears to be indicated on an overall scale, being communicated from his philosophy

1 F. Laruelle, "Résponse à Deleuze," in F. Laruelle et Collectif ed., *La Non-Philosophie des Contemporains* (Paris: Editions Kimé, 1995), pp. 49-78.

2 G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

itself. Is this not the same paradox, but reversed, which instead affects Deleuze's philosophy, a great deal communicated, but little understood, even less utilised?

This problem is undoubtedly undecidable in philosophical terms, each philosophy defining its own concept of 'communication,' thus scrambling the references or codes which allow an 'objective' evaluation of communicational and non-communicational powers, along with the power of miscommunication whose combination defines the philosophical. On the other hand, a book as widely successful as *What Is Philosophy?* and so assured of its own force makes the affect of the philosophical depend so much on science and art (not science 'itself' and art 'itself' or practically, but the philosophical concept of science and art: not cinema 'itself' or practically, but the concept of cinema, etc.) that this pure revolt of 'science itself' and 'art itself' as immanent practices without concept, auto-legislative without philosophical authority, can only be asserted against a philosophy also assured of itself. 'There is reason to revolt against the philosophers' is where philosophy, in its greatest triumph, further encourages itself. This is the moment when philosophy, perhaps, no longer recognizes the autonomy of science and art, that it denies their autonomy with the utmost subtlety. The 'concordant' style of the book, at least its 'proximal' style of reciprocal respect—undoubtedly that which is opposed to communication—is here its greatest danger, its most unapparent ruse, but also the remedy itself for anyone who knows how to identify it in this last sleight of hand. This resides in the fact that the auto-affirmation of philosophy, its re-affirmation being directed against its historical and worldly precariousness, can do nothing but trouble other philosophers. On the other hand, the eroded pedestal which is set up for science and art again forces thought to posit the hypothesis that a 'art-thought' and 'science-thought' are possible and must be experimented with, undoubtedly only being able to be re-affirmed along with philosophy.

Therefore, how do we make this book into a problem, but a new type of problem since it is already itself the solution to the problem of what a problem is? Let us suppose that there exists a book and it is called: 'What is philosophy?' and that it claims to respond to this question through its own existence or manifestation. It is thus impossible to discuss it: because this book is at the centre of philosophy and philosophy at the centre of this book; because *philosophia sive natura* and because one

does not converse with God, because one does not communicate with natural phenomena, because one does not argue with Spinoza. This is an absolute book. It has written, spoken, and made itself into a response to the question: 'what can a book do, particularly a book of 'philosophy'?' In other words, it can do nothing but auto-write. And what can the readers of this book do, if not get off on a philosophy which is done without them?

In that case, the lasting tone of the familiar and vesperal conversation, between friends, around the Elder and the Stranger, along with non-philosophy come to tell the marvellous story of philosophy—is also the tone of this book, its unsustainable lightness, between the philosopher's confession of faith and the fairy tales in which the oldest philosophers take delight. We can no longer give in to it. Because if it is a question of doing what they have done rather than saying what they have said, perhaps there still remains one last situation they have not foreseen: really doing what they said they did or what they have only done by saying, once again mixing doing and saying under the name of 'creation,' as all philosophers have. It remains to do or practice, only to practice, the immanence that they say and which is perhaps still only that of the philosophical saying; it remains to practice in regard to their saying-immanence. Not to comment on this book, by making a problem of it, is perhaps no longer to want to do anything besides what they have done. Because to want to deconstruct *What Is Philosophy?*, opposing it once more to Wittgenstein, Heidegger, or Derrida, would be both easy as well as useless or impossible: how would you like to deconstruct the event itself of philosophy, Christ and Spinoza-Christ? On the other hand, is it perhaps still possible to really do what they have thought to do—here the real perhaps being nothing more than the Other of philosophy?

I – The imitation of Spinoza and the evangelist of philosophy

This is a curious dialogue of the living dead, a theatre of dead figures who still live through the becomings or metamorphoses which convey them, a dialogue in mid-speech. There are the Greeks—Socrates and Plato rather than Epicurus or Lucretius. There is Spinoza, Nietzsche, Bergson—the fetish-triad: Benedict, Friedrich, Henri and the others, or the things of philosophy. There is Kant and Husserl—the bad side of

philosophy, its derivative side, its zone—yes: the 'dropout' philosophers [*philosophes 'zonards'*]. And further still there are the great 'communicators' of contemporary philosophy. Then there is Christ as function of singularity or void case of the event, of the once-and-for-all, occupied by Spinoza, a Spinoza more Christlike than Christian, for whom Christ is a new mask—a place perhaps also occupied by Dionysus, let us not forget, because, between Spinoza and Nietzsche, Christ has finally been crucified or re-crucified. The confession of faith by philosophers holds absolutely to this imitation of Spinoza, the prophet of immanence: whoever has seen Spinoza has seen philosophy in its glory. Philosophical faith has ceased being an attempt, but its auto-realization is not its suppression: on the contrary, its parousia is its existence itself, in other words, here, its becoming: a full or natural faith. Spinoza realizes philosophy as Christ realizes faith: we will say in both cases, under two possible writings, that they both realize a faith-for-all/once-and-for-all [*foi(s)-pour-toutes*]. This is a philosophy for-all, if you will, which is another way of saying the One-All.

How is it disguised? Are we not a bit surprised by this return of the 'grand style' in philosophy and by this rivalry with Plato, Spinoza or Hegel? The philosophical scene, scattered, communicational and planetary, is all of a sudden flown over by a *philosophia* close to being *perennis*, at least eternal via fixed *survey (flight-over* [*survolée*]*) or co-extension, a co-*intension to self or its becomings. Our authors still believe in logic, obviously not Anglo-Saxon logic, but logicity such as it is represented by the Spinozist attribute, or the Nietzschean perspective, or perhaps through Hegelian logicity. In their own way, they never stop polishing the Grand mirror, that of Wittgenstein, the thousand surfaces of the plane of immanence, which they fold and refold precisely so as to prevent it from breaking, from being disseminated or plunged into another immanence, that of language games or textual forces for example. They never stop saying that these are concepts that 'show themselves' and can do nothing but show themselves. They never stop appealing to logic so as to definitively hold their tongues, a formula which is not simply negative. They don't like history, which is for them undoubtedly a bit too uneven. And they prefer to smooth out the becomings which, so as to be recounted by those whom they call idiots, perhaps lack, for some of us at least, the sound and the fury that typifies modernity. The event is Stoic, but it has a tendency to be Platonized in an unrestrained way; and the

private man who accompanies these becomings and suffers through them remains in the eye of the storm, in which a strange peace reigns no doubt, but a peace nonetheless.

We would say that this overly eternal book simultaneously lacks philosophical modernity and the Judaic turn that determines a large part of philosophy in the 20th century. In Hegel's judgment for example, Deleuze would also lack the 'principle of personality' as well as the reflection and discovery of Kantian subjectivity. However, the book never stops touching on Hegel or aligning itself in some way with him: through the concept as philosophical activity; through Christ as emblematic figure of the event of 'philosophy,' of its completion and opening; through the circle of auto-position and through the positivity of the infinite. And yet, it is impossible to speak of a 'return to Hegel.'

As for the Judaic turn, it has retained just the minimum tolerable by philosophical authority, the homeopathic or precisely Spinozist dose, not the Levinasian or heteropathic dose. It is obviously the infinite which is in play here, along with the Other (*Autrui*), Others, the Friend and the Brother who, placed at the front of the book, form a signal and advertisement: we Spinozists are also contemporaries! Let us take these two points and test them on this mitigation of Judaism, this sort of cruel mildness of the becomings through which Deleuze resolves any conflict.

As for the Other, in effect, far from being the infinite outside-concept and outside-world that holds me hostage, this is still a concept and a world—a 'possible world' no doubt, but a world nonetheless. Moreover, here is a philosopher like Nietzsche who has friends rather than disciples, and whose principal affect is perhaps fraternity, but as becoming or passing through: we are not brothers, we become them, which is another way of refusing to be the keeper or hostage of the Other man. Nietzsche is given a 'big brother' with Spinoza. We will not say that Deleuze is the little brother of these two, but that he is the other brother—instead of being otherwise-than-brother. This affect of fraternity is not sufficient to establish a democracy, nor does it found one here, without it being a question of a disguised return to a community with an aristocratic essence. What interests Deleuze is what happens or passes between democracy and aristocracy. The essence of philosophy achieved as becoming is therefore certainly not 'democracy'—it seems to us in every sense of the word, and not only in the sense of liberal democracy or the ethics of the Other man.

As for the infinite, if, like all philosophers, Deleuze has never had but one problem, it is justifiably this one. It is no longer a question of thinking the infinite ('myself' being finite, how can I think the infinite?) but of 'infinite-'thinking. It is sufficient for that to allow the infinite to think itself. Because the infinite itself is thought out, a triad is necessary: initially, an auto-position or an auto-production, later that of desiring machines, and today that of concepts; next, a plane, the full body without organs, and today the plane of immanence in the state of fixed *survey*; finally, a consequence follows, an inevitable marginalization of the human subject as action and passion; one could say 'man enjoys' [*l'homme jouit*] with the same reserve that Spinoza has said: 'man thinks.' That, however, is the machine destined to resolve the problem of the infinite. Besides, it still has to produce something. What is the philosophical discovery proper to Deleuze if this is a philosophy without objects and theses, but a machine, if his work does not have thematic unity and can only be dismembered according to classical articulations, through objects, themes or methods, if there are nothing but functions? His philosophical discovery proper is not the Spinoza-Nietzsche-Bergson triad, because he is not a historian of philosophy, contrary to whatever may be said, but the fact that he sets philosophy in-becoming: this is not the Event, the Stoics having already discovered it, nor the Multiple, for there is Nietzsche. Perhaps this is the infinite power of the event, Spinoza, Nietzsche, and Bergson's power of infinite variation, in other words, when philosophy is fulfilled and glides through itself like the chimera of the water-fish. His proper discovery is infinite unlimited becoming as the principle solution and variation of 'creation' in thought.

Since this is a matter of Christ and the good news, we will say that this is the St. John of philosophy, but an *a posteriori* John, who obviously blocks St. Paul, and whose task is to open our eyes to the unique event which forces thinking but which, being unique, can only be repeated or carried to the power of the infinite. Hence his practice: potentialize the philosophers, make them into events, becomings and jouissances; continually change concepts but never change operations; mask Spinoza, Nietzsche, etc. Hence his *ethos*: man is at home not 'in' the infinite, but as the infinite's neighbor—if you will—an infinite becoming-ethological. Hence his ethics: the imitation of Spinoza-Christ, the always partial identification with philosophers; wisdom as creation, but as eternal creation, a gentle or weakened creation, since nothing is created *ex nihilo*.

What he calls 'creation,' through Nietzsche and Bergson united, is this infinite operation, *causa sui*, this eternal commentary focused on history, an almost divine commentary which, instead of attaching sense to it hermeneutically, attaches it to operations, extracting them from events, making the proper names fulgurate. Deleuze has discovered a secret—the secret or the property of philosophy, a secret which gives us the impression that it is very old and that it has been lost. He discovers the philosophical idiom, which has however become alien to itself, but which remains an idiom precisely because it has become the language of the infinite. The language of the good news is absolutely private and absolutely universal. Their coincidence is the peak of the auto-contemplation of the philosophical community. Hence the horror displayed towards consensus and communication which are transcendent artifacts.

II – Response to Deleuze's objections on the One, science and non-philosophy

Deleuze makes a triple critique – explicit or implicit – of what we call 'non-philosophy' and opposes another concept to it, precisely a concept of non-philosophy:

1) The One which non-philosophy thinks would implicitly be a 'One-All close to Spinoza:' only close, not exactly identical, for the following reason:
2) it in fact gives rise to a science rather than a philosophy (as it should); 'non-philosophy' should also be non-science;
3) finally, an implicit critique but one which allows itself to be read from the text: 'non-philosophy' wishes to be external to philosophy, the science of the latter, whereas it must be a presupposition internal to philosophy.

It is remarkable that these three critiques, which form a system, are founded on a principle misunderstanding, a hasty and theoretically faulty

interpretation concerning the One, which becomes problematic in non-philosophy. Let us respond to these three points.

(1) To the first objection: The One in question, the radical immanence through which it is defined, is not above all the One-All, whether 'close' or not to Spinoza, but instead a One-without-All, and even a One-without-Being, which we call the One-in-the-last-instance in order to oppose it to the convertibility which it refuses of the One and of Being, similar to the Spinozist reversibility of the One and the All. Certain contemporary philosophers abhor the One—and with good reason. We do as well: however, on the condition of specifying that it is then a question of the One correlative to the Multiple under any title or relation, and convertible through an inversion—whether close or not—with Being. Because the One prevails over Being or the Multiple, or the Multiple over the One, or because they alternately prevail over one another, these are clearly possible solutions which must be explored, but this is precisely not our problem. A real critique of immanence according to Deleuze is now possible; and among other possibilities, it can be constructed on behalf of a form of immanence still more radical, excluding all transcendence outside of it: not only theological objects and entities, but also the ultimate form of transcendence, auto-position or survey, the fold or doublet, etc. The One-in-the-last-instance is the true suspension of this One-All and, in a general way, of all reciprocity, in other words, of all relation without possible exception, essentially 'without relation' to Being.

This is in fact to exclude the following two metaphysical translations that would be given from what we call thought of the One or non-philosophy: (1) the One would signify One-for-All, the Once-and-for-All of the event. This is excluded since the One essentially has no need of the All and is not alienated here, even if the All requires the One; (2) the One would signify, on the contrary, All-for-the-One. This is also excluded because that which is not the One, Being as multiple or as science, is relatively autonomous, specific, and forms an instance irreducible to the One in which it nevertheless has its cause, but a cause which is only in-the-last-instance. This type of causality reciprocally assures to the One-real and (transcendental) science their respective autonomy. 'Science' is by the One, not for the One.

(2) To the second objection: The One-in-the-last-instance gives rise to... or causes a thought which cannot be science rather than philosophy but is the unified theory of science and philosophy which must then be understood as 'transcendental science.' For us as well, science, but not only its essence, is the authentic 'ontology,' except that it is no longer a philosophical *logos*. Therefore Being is here no longer auto-position: in this precise sense, it is inconsistent or non-consistent; it is no longer the Being of philosophical ontology. It is de-posited by the One, absolutely dis-autopositioned by it, which nevertheless also guarantees the nature of its multiplicity, thus of the philosophically inconsistent multiple. We do not understand science traditionally beginning with a philosophical triad posited *a priori* (concepts, plane of immanence, conceptual personae) of which it would be a form despite all decay [*degradeé*] in a state of decline or a slowing down in relation to a chaos of infinite speeds which philosophy alone would protect (triad of the function, the plane of reference, and partial observers). Science as 'unified theory' is instead the first and only thought issuing from the real as One-in-the-last-instance and has for its object the inconsistent multiple, which it furthermore inhabits and beginning from which it can be made, under certain conditions, the science of the One itself.

(3) To the third objection: Non-philosophy is not the presupposition internal to philosophy, the plane of immanence other than the concept, internal and external to it; this is what philosophy becomes under the conditions of its unified theory with science. It is not external and internal to philosophy, it comes after it as the result of the work of this discipline on its philosophical material. Thus it is not simply the Other of philosophy, a new version of the Other, since, far from still being internal to the latter, it is in radical heteronomy in relation to it, finding its cause in the One rather than in the Other.

'Non-philosophy' has an ambiguous value: it is a new commodity that circulates on the market of philosophy only at the risk of the gravest misunderstanding. We have never understood by this term what Deleuze-Guattari here really and truly recuperate for the benefit of the authority of philosophy. On the one hand, this concept is not destined to introduce an alterity into philosophy under a form still masterable by the latter, instead

being charged, as we have seen in this book, with exalting without retaining philosophical *hubris* and its authority, despite all the precautions taken in order to bring together, and only to bring together, philosophy, science and art; because, on the contrary, this togetherness does not destroy the ancient hierarchical and aristocratic ideal of all philosophy. From the outset, non-philosophical practice is instead destined to revoke the authority of philosophy without destroying philosophy, which is still required as data or phenomena of a new science.

On the other hand, if the idea of non-philosophy does not respond to the problem here, then how do we render the philosophical idiom foreign to itself while completely conserving it? Consequently, it is the solution to another problem: how do we determine a more theoretically rigorous form of thought, simultaneously more real and more universal than philosophy, making the latter a particular case, or perhaps, a simple model?

Unlike Husserl and so many others, it is not a question of introducing science into a supposedly valid philosophy under the conditions of the latter or of making philosophy a science. But in order to elaborate it in terms whose schematic nature is understood, it is a question of transforming philosophy into a simple variable, treating the One-real and its aprioristic structures of science as constant functions or relations, and finally by deducing this from non-philosophical statements.

Lastly, these rectifications are also a real critique; not so much of Deleuze-the-philosopher than of the philosopher in Deleuze and the philosophy proceeding through this genre of falsification which always expresses a resistance.

III – Tableau of principal distinctions

Let us call 'restrained' non-philosophy that which still finds its site in philosophy, which remains the mistress of this alterity or limitation, and 'generalized' non-philosophy that which issues from the vision-in-One and is effectuated as the unified theory of science and philosophy representing a generalization of philosophy under the conditions of non-philosophy. We will oppose these two types on a certain number of points with the following theses:

1.1 – In restrained non-philosophy issuing from Spinoza and Nietzsche, the One and the Multiple, Being and the One, the One and the All are reciprocal, no doubt under the radical form of reversibility which destroys their metaphysical forms but reaffirms or intensifies the great axiom of their convertibility, founder of philosophy.

1.2 – In generalized non-philosophy, the One and the Multiple, Being and the One, the One and the All are no longer reciprocal. And this is absolutely so: not even close to a reversal of their hierarchy or even close to an inhibition of their reciprocity. This is a new disposition of the One, of Being and the Existent [*L'Être et L'Etant*] through which they are henceforth measured in their relation of causality called the determination-in-the-last-instance in which the One precedes Being without any sort of alienation.

2.1 – The immanence of the One-All remains that of a plane or a universal over-determined by the multiple; it is an immanence to self which indicates that the multiple precisely has an ultimate intentionality and positionality. This is an auto-positional immanence which remains restrained precisely as immanence, because it wants to encompass Being or the universal, because it guards in its heart the form of transcendence itself, if not transcendent entities, and because it double-crosses itself [*s'entr'empêche*] in this way.

2.2 – The immanence of the One-without-All is no longer auto-positional but precisely non-positional (of) self or non-thetic (of) self, absolutely deprived of the forms of transcendence which constitute the fold, survey, and becoming. If there is a break governed by immanence itself, it passes between the One and the All rather than between the One-All and its so-called modes which are, in a very limited and restrictive way, 'transcendent'...

3.1 – The Multiple, etc... remains imprisoned by the One-All or consistency under the form of the auto- or over-position [*sur-position*]. The Multiple here is not originally rescued from consistency; therefore,

its inconsistency appears necessary as a lack or a deficiency, despite all the precautions taken.

3.2 – The Multiple of non-philosophy is transcendentally constituted by the One-in-the-last-instance, undoubtedly beginning from the philosophical Multiple, from the mixture of the One-Multiple; but, on the one hand, the One suspends the latter's consistency through auto- or over-position and, on the other, determines it as radical multiple. Being is neither a plane nor an ecstatic horizontal project, neither an infinite plane nor a full body whose horizon would become a line of flight.

4.1 – The non-philosophy issuing from Nietzsche and Spinoza is a limited and still philosophical attempt in the application of philosophical authority and whose power [*puissance*] in relation to deconstructions could even be discussed, if not 'decided,' and at least measured by the compared force of the affects or the real which is attributed to each.

4.2 – Non-philosophy, such as it is issued from the vision-in-One rather than a philosophical decision and is effectuated as radically inconsistent multiple, (in other words, 'opposed' to every philosophical, and not only scientific, form of consistency, for example the particular hierarchy of Being) commences by globally suspending the authority of philosophy without however destroying or denying the latter, delivering it instead as a simple material to the operations of a 'force (of) thought' which is only this determination-in-the-last-instance under its concrete form.

5.1 – Restrained non-philosophy is restrained by restraining the reality of science in relation to philosophy and vice versa, by finally freeing philosophy from positing itself as primary and as the guardian of the real, hero of the One-All. The infinite potentialization of metaphysics—superphysics—along with the deconstruction of metaphysics, begins by postulating the authority of philosophy over the Real and therefore by devalorizing science, even if it marks a progress by making science a kind of neighboring Other to philosophy.

5.2 – Generalized non-philosophy begins upon a basis of thought which is itself neither scientific nor philosophical—the One as cause-in-the-last-instance (the 'force (of) thought') rather than as philosophical presupposition; but it shows that this One is only thinkable in a thought that utilizes philosophy as its material or its phenomena, rather than in a philosophy whose authority is likewise supported from the beginning.

6.1 – Restrained non-philosophy is a simple presupposition of philosophy, a dimension of the latter rather than its essence or its becoming; a condition of philosophy which must overcome the latter and which remains under its authority.

6.2 – For us, non-philosophy is an absolutely specific and positive program of thought, more than a simple heteronomous relation to philosophy. It supposes more than the refusal of philosophy's authority; another use, but positive, as material and particular case of non-philosophy. Non-philosophy is a program that is carried out in an Immanent way.

IV – The problem of Immanence: the case of Spinoza

More than the multiple, if there is a problem that traverses current philosophy in its stage of research, it is the problem of immanence. Two poles are divided on the treatment of the One: 1) the One as All, through the reduction of the most massive transcendences, not of transcendence itself; this is the solution coming from Spinoza and Deleuze; 2) the One as auto-affection or immanent life called 'radical,' but which remains in the general form of the cogitative type of Ego and which hesitates in a treatment of transcendence that is still transcendent. Even if life is the method, it substitutes a final transcendence of atmosphere, a final empiricism of the critique of the latter: this is Michel Henry's solution.

Against these two solutions, yet in closer proximity to the second, we oppose the One-in-the-last-instance as immanence without ontico-ontological content, which is therefore no longer thought in accordance with an act of givenness or auto-affection, in the ultimate accordance with

the transcendence in opposition to which, as Ego, it would be characterized.

With the problem of immanence we are on a precipice where everything can be lost or saved. It is a question of knowing if immanence will be the Real even while being only (to) self; or, better yet, if it finally remains the property of a plane, of a universal, etc., and even of an Ego.

In effect, how do we assure a priority for immanence without neglecting or denying transcendence? Where do we make the line of demarcation pass, and is it justifiably a question of such a line? Furthermore, does immanence necessarily form an infinite plane, an infinite speed if, in fact, it does not have to form a space of reference defined by axes or coordinates? Rather than the One, Being, the Other or the Existent, Deleuze correctly devotes himself to these two operators which separate them and are like the couple of coordinates with which he constructs the nature of thought. But he precisely draws a line of demarcation, dismembers this couple and chooses immanence 'alone' as the element of thought, globally rejecting transcendence as theology, illusion, and servitude. Philosophy recognizes itself in this type of exclusive choice which in fact surreptitiously reintroduces the other term, thus a use without knowing it which reconstitutes a coupling, a more profound reversibility than any explicit thematization of reversibility.

For example, why 'between-two,' 'between-time,' 'between-multiple,' 'eternal becoming,' etc.? Through a more profound mixture than any survey, auto-position or plane of immanence and which explains each of these: mixture of immanence and the multiple, i.e. transcendence. The problem of immanence is nevertheless completely original and specific.

Without fully doing it right, Deleuze falls back too quickly onto the multiple, which is his initial problem to which immanence is subordinated. But the relations of the One and Being are specific, original and can never be reduced to those of Being and the Multiple, of Being as One, or even as Multiple. It is also useless to claim to clarify the status of Being and the proper content of transcendence as long as immanence of itself has not demonstrated its non-convertibility with transcendence.

Between immanence and multiplicity, i.e. transcendence, Deleuze proceeds like he does with every contrasted couple: philosophy is initially given its more or less reversible pairing; consequently, neither term is elaborated in an adequate and definitive way, but they turn together, back-

to-back, in the indefinite circle of reciprocal determination. On the contrary, a non-philosophy as unified theory requires that immanence be initially given and assured, but this would be only to guarantee the reality, rigor, and non-circular nature of its reasoning. Only then, on this secure foundation, will it begin to elucidate the essence of the multiple that fulfills the (non-)real, the void of Being, and its mode of givenness after the One in accordance with the data of philosophy. It identifies each order in its absolute or relative autonomy without confusing them or even taking them to a state of fusion or indiscernability.

The injunction: 'to self rather than to something else' is in fact imperative, but it conceals an indetermination, an ambiguous determination. An amphibology is contained in the 'to' of 'to-self' which reintroduces—in lieu of other things, i.e. thingified transcendences—the pure form of transcendence itself as distance or relation, as surface or universal plane. All of this is obviously not characteristic of metaphysical, traditional or dialectical thought: this is not the scission of an identity, nor the indivisible and coextensive distance of Unity. The philosophically normal but theoretically amphibological concept of the 'plane of immanence' signifies that the latter still turns around the plane and the plane still turns around the 'to' ('to self') as axis of transcendence. Immanence then remains 'objective,'—even without an object—remains the appearance of objectivity, and gives rise to a new image of the Real and thought. Instead of being absolutely faceless [*sans visage*] and unthinkable [*inenvisageable*], it takes on the face of the plane, a topology, survey and contemplation. The Spinozist philosopher makes the line of demarcation pass between Being-without-existent—but always in the state of auto-position—and the Existent as 'transcendent' entity, between the field of presence and present objects, instead of making it pass initially between the One and Being, or the Real and objectivity.

Is transcendence then really abandoned? That of transcendent things, ontic transcendence, undoubtedly, or the doublet of object-objectivity, but no more than this. From the beginning there subsists a residue of the object, an ontic residue: here the Existent appears as a system of flows/partial objects, or as the indiscernability of concepts via 'bridges' and 'zones'—this is what it retains from the old idealistic object when it is passed through the millstone of the Mœbius strip. Then from Being it retains the plane of immanence or the full body without organs, the strip

itself, which is precisely the immanent internal form of transcendence, but never a real immanence. It is no longer 'to' the other in the sense of an ontic object; but far from being radically 'to' self, it is still 'to' pure transcendence, 'to' the pure form of transcendence. It is understood that in this type of philosophy—yet the problem is invariant—pure transcendence alone can finally be called that which is immanent to self, and that behind the given operates the givenness-machine or the plane of immanence which necessarily must reappear behind 'concepts.'

In non-philosophy, there will no longer be a 'line of demarcation' that will be able to pass between Being and the One; consequently, the philosopher's favorite operation will be deposed.

The 'to' of the 'to self' is undoubtedly foreign to self-consciousness and intentional consciousness. But this is an easy victory. It conceals one last form of transcendence and even intentionality: the superior form of a topological type of distance. So much more than a genealogy of its transcendent forms (in phenomenology for example) is possible beginning from the plane of immanence. If concepts correspond to the substances in an attribute, or better yet to Nietzschean hierarchies of forces, the plane of immanence is the unity of these substances, a unity that possesses at least the same general structure of coupling that gives it an infinite power. Hence the concepts of fusion, penetration, indiscernability, and consistency which undoubtedly are opposed to the transcending of existence, but by globally internalizing the all or the essence of transcendence into immanence, through a new type of non-dialectical or non-Hegelian recovery. Hence this geology or stratigraphy which masks the Nietzschean spirit of hierarchy; the auto-position of the concept as surface or absolute volume; the stratigraphic piling of the layers of the plane; all the forms which suppose the fold.

In addition, one could speak of overposition rather than auto-position: that would change nothing in the principle of the solution. What is called immanence is in reality also position and transcendence: their pairing is the passage or becoming of the between-two, not a unity of ontological and 'transcendent' synthesis but the unity through becoming of this between-two. The plane is the continuous passage to self, thus survey or overposition. Not of transcendence in immanence, undoubtedly, at least in Husserl's sense, but their co-intension, that which passes/happens between the one and the other.

Consequently, the One is always Other and identity always marginal: but, inversely, thought is always at the heart of the Other. Immanence loses its subject-form or ego and consciousness loses its 'meta' form so as to become overascendence. More terms, nothing but becomings: the solution is assured not by the movement but by the infinite power of movement, the infinite or indivisible speed.

Spinoza, the thinker of immanence? This is a historical simplification. In reality, Spinoza has always been invoked for two contradictory reasons: for the immanence characteristic of causality, no doubt, but also for the transcendence all too characteristic of the unity of substance in relation to the so-called 'human subject' as the supposed or site of immanence. The formula of the 'human subject' is kept here, but it is obviously ambiguous (which subject? which man?). This double enlistment is significant: Spinoza, this is justifiably immanence in effect, but immanence as it is lived or received as transcendent by the human subject, external to it and too great for it—let us retain this formula—and thus Deleuze recognizes and lays claim to it, rejecting man as the third and final moment of the triad, as a piece adjacent to machines, as a persona adjacent to concepts. Here there is no essence or absolutely autonomous form of man: the latter is a system of effects and is composed beginning from its content, affections and perceptions.

The argument given is this: immanence is not to something else which is always transcendent; it is thus not to the cogito or to the ego; it is to self but not 'to itself' (emphasized p. 208, understood consequently: the ego is a preliminary form, transcendent to the immanence of the One-All). What does this argument mean? It begs the question: if immanence is that of the Spinozist substance, then in fact it is the ego which is now a transcendent form; but this is to be given what is necessary to demonstrate. The recent interpretations of the Cogito (Michel Henry and Jean-Luc Marion) are more subtle and show that radical immanence, without representation, is the essence of the Cogito. The ego can then be defined by radical immanence rather than the other way around. The problem is crucial. Undoubtedly, the solution, if man is re-submerged into pure immanence, in fact completely makes him into what Deleuze calls an idiot. But, as there are (at most) two types of immanence or the real, there will be two idiots. If immanence is absolutely without transcendence, the ego or man will be a transcendental idiot. If, on the contrary, as in Spinoza and Deleuze, it includes the pure form of

transcendence, man will be simultaneously a transcendental and transcendent idiot, i.e. half-idiot and half-philosopher, a concept which is, from our perspective, rather transcendent. What are we trying to say?

That it will be split and barred by the unity of substance: there will always be man in general or unspecified man and philosopher. Completely understood, this will no longer be a duality but a becoming-subject, an unlimited becoming-idiot or becoming-philosopher, because this is obviously the same thing. Otherwise stated, once again under the mitigated form of unlimited becoming, we find here the distinction between man and philosopher, their hierarchy despite it all. The philosopher who constructs the system and the idiot to which he refers and who certainly stumbles over the detours of the system, are no longer adequately distinguished. Once again the philosopher does not truly want stupidity, he limits it. It is necessary to admire in Deleuze the amelioration of formerly barbaric philosophical manners (of metaphysics as it developed on the shores of the Orient as well as in Greece); he civilizes philosophy, even presents it as a faculty of taste. But the problem concerning what philosophy is cannot be resolved for all that by this new suavity. And Spinoza is only the Christ of immanence, as Deleuze is only his evangelist. These two have stopped believing in God and Grammar, but they always believe in Christ and Philosophy.

V – The multiple: consistency and inconsistency

As for the multiple, it is posited as primary—as Being itself is—and thus encysted in the consistency of auto-position, the between-two or hierarchy. As in Bergson, there are apparently two types of multiplicities that form the extreme poles of becoming. But the residue of dualism that held them separate in Bergson disappears here: true multiplicities are becoming, what passes from one type (to) the other. It is impossible to hold the philosopher in contempt of monism or dualism. Nevertheless, or because of this, the philosopher consumes the unitary style of philosophy, and it is rather this qualification that arouses suspicion. On the contrary, non-philosophy would have distinguished two really heterogeneous types of multiplicities rather than their becoming-identical, rather than this between-two as becoming, this between-multiplicities as the superior unitary form of all multiplicity. On the one hand, a philosophical type or

several types is inconsequential because they fill in their variations with the same invariant that precisely wants multiplicities to be variations (philosophy) or variables (science) or varieties (art). On the other hand, there is an absolutely inconsistent or non-consistent type, in the sense that it is freed from all 'set-theory,' all calculation, and every form of auto-position. Only a 'non-Cantorian' multiple is adequate to fill the void of Being as an element of thought. This non-Cantorian concept of the multiple in its 'unilateral' duality with the mathematico-philosophical multiple (and its numerous varieties) is deduced from the determination-in-the-last-instance of Being as void, as irreality or (non-)reality, by the One itself. Not only does an absolute inconsistency, a suspense of arithmetico-philosophical consistency, belong to the essence of thought without the inductive consideration of any already existing science, but also the radical intrinsic consistency or the 'finitude' of the One itself. The liberation of the multiple, its relative autonomy, must be formed with regard to the philosophical gesture of auto-position but not with regard to the Real. First science directs the multiple to the One-real rather than simply making a new idealist absolute based on auto-position.

VI – Deleuze's topo-logic: a transcendental Mœbius

The basic unity of the marvelous machine that operates 'to' infinity is the unity-of-survey, the unity-of-sliding, the plane that continues to a torsion in which the front and back become identical. All philosophy gravitates around an imaginary model of the relations of thought and the Real, a dynamic schema of the Same composed from these two. This infinitely disguised, universal paradigm is here the Mœbius strip. Deleuze massively invests indefinitely possible and completely contingent materials into what for Lacan is only one 'topology' among many and what Derrida claims to have smashed or disseminated ('double bind').

The strip, the immanent plane, is the co-extension of front and back—their auto- or over-position. The latter is also equivalent to any of its points, the 'concepts' that participate in the same general auto-position. Over-position is this becoming-coincidence, this identity under the form of the becoming of the 'two' sides of the strip. And the strip is what passes from one side to another, the indivision of a very rapid inversion;

the between-sides or between-laterality, the continuous passage beneath which their identity is given.

Let us take up some points on the surface. They are 2 and 1. Each is two or 'divided,' but the 2 is immediately 1, 1 as becoming however, not as transcendent unity. On a Mœbius strip, it is adequate to fix a point so that the latter takes on the form of a desiring machine or a concept: the identity of this point, of the front/back, is that of a becoming-one, of a force spread out across the strip which is unlimited, a force already double, of two forces in contrary directions.

Any contrasted pair or dyad is thus in a way spread out on a strip simultaneously infinite, completely straight, and fastened to each of its points. This is the famous Nietzschean problem: it is not contraries but the passage from one contrary to another which therefore finds its solution in the Mœbius loop and its eternal, its infinite return. The identity of contraries loses its 'being' or transcendent form and takes on the form of 'becoming' or the 'strip.' If Being is not definitively lost and if it must 'return,' it will return also as the return of becoming, its objective appearance, its co-extension to-self or its survey.

In a sense, neither the 1 nor the 2 are primary in the sense of metaphysics: they are always present together. However, in the triadic system which is philosophy, their necessary combination (mixture, dyad) is variable or passes through an inversion. What is primary is the 2, becoming, 'force' or 'concept,' undoubtedly in a state of auto-position or 1, yet forming the multiple first which is 'working' and 'productive.' The 1 itself is discovered or returns as second, as plane of immanence, but this 1 of the plane is immediately two in its manner and for its account. This is why the 1 and the 2 can be treated in turn as the front and back of a 'strip.' It is inevitable that they are almost identical (this is becoming) to an inversion (this is the plane). Whatever diagram organizes the philosophical Decision, it is a decision and begins through the 2, through the multiple, intuitive diversity, experience, etc. and transcends towards the One even as it is also the One. The 1 loses the classical transcendence of its third term and merges with becoming which is now the 2. However —this is the 1's mania to exist in philosophy, in other words, despite it— it is not immanent to the becoming of the 2 without also being exterior or supplementary to it, without returning as the 1 which assuredly contains the 2 in turn (the plane of immanence is flight-over [*sur-vol*], level with itself, overposition—a distance spread across this duration [*fois-ci*] while

remaining a pure distance). There is no third term for a synthesis, but there is a triad, a different organization of the subject (3rd), of the object (1st) and of their correlation (2nd).

Every philosophical pair is subjected to this logic: for example, we can do nothing from a single type of multiplicity, it requires two—without which a metaphysical dualism persists, on the contrary, because authentic multiplicity is becoming or between-multiplicity, what passes from the one to the other and which is primary in relation to one and the other. Here is the basic element of Deleuzian logic: the becoming of the multiple which is itself multiple, an undivided and partial force, the concept as bridge or zone, the passage which is not and which will be or will find its Being beyond it by dint of not being. As for the third element of the triad (action and passion, affection and perception), it is enough to pass from the 2-that-becomes-1 to the 1-that-becomes-2, so that this passage is cut off and isolated from the first element of the triad by the second.

If there are points on a double surface, there is also the single strip that accompanies each of its points. Indeed, there is no longer a subject behind the act, no longer subject or object, no longer Being or the great One behind the 2; the great One has become the little 1 that folds with the 2. Yet there is still the All and the One, the system of desiring machines or concepts, and the plane of immanence which accompany them. There is still the shadow or the dotted lines of the All for surveying the concepts or objects/flows. There is still a presupposition so as to condition the production of concepts, a secondary but insistent presupposition which is never discarded. It's true that there is no longer a 'metaphysical' other-world, but there is the pure form of the other-world as plane of immanence, the full body or system that falls back on its machines or concepts. Desiring machines or concepts are absolute machines or 'absolute volumes'—they are not drawn from a larger machine, they are not abstracted or extracted from a greater volume. But this volume or this unique machine that we believe to have finally rescued us necessarily returns as what must be able to accompany the parts or the pieces.

In philosophy, man never stops rubbing his eyes in the face of these revolutionary marvels to which philosophy claims to accustom us and through which it diverts us. Instead of the overly classical hierarchy of the All and the Parts, the new tour of the philosophical past has inverted the relation: the parts come first (absolutized as 'partial objects' etc.), then

the All—consequently an All without parts fading into the horizon, into the vicinity of the parts. This is an All becoming smooth, imperceptible and monstrous to the same degree—an All to be feared. The philosopher begins as a large, Greek child to end up a small, post-modern kid.

VII – What is thinking? A scientific problem

These problems cross into another whose solution dismembers the famous Parmenidean matrix: Being and Thought are the Same. The philosophical gesture is woven into idealism: the Given is not reduced simply to reality ('Being'); it equally includes Thinking, which is also essentially supposed as given, this time under transcendent forms non-deduced from the One-real alone. Instead of being this all-purpose solution, thinking only becomes a problem when it ceases being copied from some knowledge or perception, or separated from experience, and when it is inserted into the question: how can we still think when the One alone is given? How can we still think Being and thought when there is nothing but the One-real which is given without anything presupposed? Between the Given (the One) and the data (philosophy), it is the philosophical type of presupposition, Being and the Plane of immanence, that must be excluded on behalf of a presupposition without auto-position in order to deduce the essence of thought from these two forms of cause. Philosophers do not begin without being given too much, without 'presupposing,' that is, autopositing beyond the Given. They already know what Being and Thought are—they suppose philosophy itself to be valid—whereas non-philosophy only knows the Given and discovers the form of thought that 'functionally' sets them in relation. Philosophers are given philosophy in order to prolong it, reaffirm it or even deconstruct it, but they cannot understand that, as hunters of presuppositions, they are fascinated by the phantasmatic belief in presupposition. Let us call 'non-philosophy' the manner of thinking that does not know *a priori* what it is to think or to think the One. It no longer possesses an Idea of science; there is no longer an Idea of the Idea. It only has the project of thinking the One and consequently no longer possesses, on the side of the One, the data of philosophy now disposable to the state of material. Philosophers know for all eternity the idiom-of-the-Real, for they suppose that it is one; but non-philosophy only 'knows' the Real, only possesses it or is

possessed by it, and makes the discovery of this idiom and its use concerning the One a testable theoretical hypothesis, a problem that philosophy no longer resolves except for the solution which is deemed necessary. The One is neither the last nor in-the-last-instance cause (of thought), but the first cause, and not as the result of a method or operation. Thought becomes a problem when its solution is deduced from the One as though from the absolute Given…

VIII – Axioms of a non-Spinozist thought

Let us imagine a Spinozism that would be a transcendental science rather than the exaltation of philosophical naïveté—consequently, a non-Spinozism. Here are some of its axioms:

1 – The One is in-One—it is of itself desubstantialized—rather than the One-of-substance or reversible with the latter;

2 – A unilateral distinction rather than a line of demarcation passes between the One and substance, or rigorously, between the One (of substance) and the attributes;

3 – The One is cause-in-the-last-instance (of Substance or) of the attributes rather than simply expressing its essence in the attributes;

4 – The 'attributes' (Being and Thought) reflect the One in their transcendental essence or in their expression without which the One could not be expressed;

5 – The 'attributes' are determined in-the-last-instance by the One and occasionally by the data of philosophy;

6 – If the One-in-One or in-the-last-instance and the data of philosophy are conceived as 'modes,' what happens to the 'attributes,' that is, to Being and Thinking?

Instead of attempting to understand the causality known as the 'determination-in-the-last-instance' through the Spinozist model of immanent cause, albeit an immanence still impregnated with transcendence—as Althusser has tried to show—it is time to change the hypothesis and invert the explanation: stretch out Spinoza along the determination-in-the-last-instance expressed as the most radical causality of immanences; treat Spinozism (and Nietzsche, and Bergson…) as simple philosophical data, as the 'modes' of this One and Being from which they 'flow.' Thus determine a use of occasion rather than imitation of Spinoza, 'knowledge' of rather than 'identification' with Spinoza; an occasionalism for him and all philosophies.

To stop imitating Spinoza, what does that entail? Not to change behavior, to grasp one *ethos* while abandoning another, but to change our experience and our knowledge of behavior, of philosophical ethics as the superior form of behavior, to lead the philosophical ethologos down the paths of a non-ethology or a non-ethics. That thought could even be a 'superior' or 'transcendental' ethology only inspires disgust—man is neither plant nor animal, terrestrial nor celestial, not even a becoming-plant or a becoming-animal: it would still be necessary to feel it rather than resent it and allow it to be lost in ressentiment and repression. Against infinite variation, against Spinoza's infinite variance or potentialization, let us oppose a non-Spinozism more universal still, such that Spinoza himself will be nothing more than a model or a restrained interpretation. To denude the Spinoza-event rather than making it fulgurate in a Heraclitean way while returning it to the multiple and the chaos which inhabits the void of thought.

IX – The last philosophical antinomy: "I, the philosopher, am lying"

What relation does man support in given experience—real or illusory, either way—to history, sciences and the arts? That of an allusion. The allusion, this ludic unraveling that consumes itself in joy, is the relation that programs its topological properties to 'metrical' or other data in the internal manner of a Mœbius strip. Immanence is useful here to save transcendence by detaching it from its empirical conditions or transcendent entities. More than ever the secret ambition of all philosophy is realized: use the One to rescue Being or the All, use

immanence to guard Being from the prestige of the Existent. The One assures the allusive character of philosophy, because Being, being infinite, can be nothing but a simple allusion to the Existent since it is no longer intrinsically affected and conditioned by it as in 'metaphysical' representation, even in Heidegger in virtue of the finite reception of the Existent. Transcendence is always already allusion to...the Existent, but philosophy is the systematic form of this allusion. For example, that which is 'becoming' is an allusion to history, upon which it does not touch without also surveying. That which is called 'philosophy' is an allusion to culture, science and art, and 'the One-All close to Spinoza' is an 'allusion' to the One-of-the-last-instance...An allusion that nourishes itself on the former in order to slip them in for an instant and save them.

These are disastrous consequences for 'empirical data:' not only are they deprived of reality, but they are also above all necessarily thought of as deficient or degraded, as reification or 'actualization' of becoming. Their reality is an illusion, an appearance, a deficiency of their auto-position in and by the strip. That which is 'auto-'posited (as we say, that which has 'suicided') and posited by what is more powerful than it, the Mœbian form of all auto-position, is thus not posited in itself or by itself and must sever all continuity with its 'double' or its empirical 'indication' or convey it as simple appearance. Such is the most general presupposition of every absolute idealism and perhaps of all philosophy, an idealism which is here equally an absolute realism ('real without being actual, ideal without being abstract'):[3] 'experience' is generally conveyed from the outset as denuded of its reality. Thanks to their reversibility with philosophy as the understanding of problems, stupidity and evil are appearances without consistency or reality. Precisely, there is no absolute evil, nothing but reversible or transformable stupidity. Experience is the suicide of philosophy itself and above all when the latter is an absolute empiricism; experience and plenty of other things: man, the suicide of philosophy...The system of flight [*fuite*], and of flight as self-enjoyment. Superior politics of abandon-all-posts, of the 'superior' abandon because it takes its reason from itself. No book of philosophy will ever demonstrate the philosophical lie and draw such a powerful jouissance from it with more shamelessness and perhaps honesty—or naiveté.

Like any great book having attained its proper perfection and manifested its force, *What Is Philosophy?* pushes us to an exclusive

3 Ibid., p. 22.

alternative, even exclusive beyond the philosophical inclusion of alternatives, in a disjunction where philosophy is nothing more than a solution alongside an 'all' rather different than the all of solutions. But an alternative that is also destroyed as such and as disjunction in general, constraining us to renounce the false choices: either philosophy or science, in the name of a compulsory constraint more vibrant than fulgurating. Is it the One that results for the One-All? Does it result for philosophy? Non-philosophy is this result.

We are now ready to pose the last problem.

If this book never naively tells the idealist lie of philosophy and if it is philosophical *par excellence* (its naiveté), is it really capable of telling this lie or continuing to lie? Does this double lie make a new truth or simply a new abyss for truth? Let us give the paradox of Epimetheus a slightly more interesting form, or let us generalize it: 'I, the philosopher, am lying' as the paradox of all possible paradoxes. Would not an absolutely transcendental and radical concept of science be necessary in order to eliminate this antinomy which is more powerful than the others, rather than a weak and 'logical' concept of thought as science? Not a philosophy or a logic of science, but better yet, a transcendental science —not of science—but of the essence (of) science?

X – Philosophical survival and life itself

We would love to be able to say: none of this is against Deleuze—such a perfect philosopher—but all of it is 'against' philosophy. However, it is impossible to make this division: the major risk taken by Deleuze—moreover against the entirety of the most critical and tormented modernity, though this is not our problem—is precisely that of being unreservedly identified, without remainder, with *philosophy* [*LA philosophie*] playing with itself. This is due to being immersed in the latter through an identification without critique. He not only refuses to take seriously the last excesses committed against philosophy, the last assassination attempt—the Judaic, Levinas against Spinoza—but also confuses its identification in the pure transcendence of philosophizing—his own immersion in transcendence itself being transcended—justifiably with the immanence for which he would like his operation to succeed. Nothing of philosophy and philosophical understanding is foreign to him

—he has set up a confusing alacrity—and nevertheless he ignores the slightly sensational news so that no philosophical 'communication' and obviously not even the non-philosophical critique of communication could reach him, which is the fact that philosophy cannot claim to be completed in joy or jouissance instead of starving to death nihilistically, as is the case for its adversaries, because it is stillborn, born-as-dead, a simple allusion to life...Let us risk the word in a Deleuzian vein: an after-life [*sur-vie*]...Those who cease to make us laugh are the ones who in fact confuse philosophy's death with that of God, Being or the Subject. But those who confuse philosophical passion with life will hardly make us laugh any less. As long as philosophy comes to 'life' and 'joy' it descends to its grave. It is a premature birth that is only viable through artificial means, an abortion that only finds life in what attributes it to those who identify themselves there. It needed this identification in order to survive. But we who attribute life to it, will we one day be capable of no longer lying in the name of survival and recognizing the truth: will we be able to stop considering survival in the name of life?

Translated by Taylor Adkins and Sid Littlefield

Pli 19 (2008), 165-194

On the Sublime in Nietzsche's *Dawn*

KEITH ANSELL-PEARSON

> My demand: to produce beings who stand sublimely [*erhaben dastehen*] above the whole human species: and to sacrifice oneself and one's 'neighbours' to this goal.[1]

Introduction

In this essay I want to explore how the sublime is employed in *Dawn*[2], especially the final book, book five, of the text.[3] My contention is that in this text Nietzsche is in search of new possibilities for the sublime as a concept and an experience. In the early to mid 1870s Nietzsche has, in essence, figured the sublime in two principal ways: as the 'tragic sublime' in *The Birth of Tragedy*[4], in which nauseous thoughts about the dreadful and absurd character of existence, as human beings encounter it, are

1 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Sämtiche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden* (München, Berlin & New York: dtv/de Gruyter, 1988), hereafter *KSA*, 10, 7 [21], 1883.

2 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Dawn: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*, trans. Brittain Smith (Stanford: Stanford University Press, forthcoming), hereafter *D*. For *Morgenröthe* I have largely relied on the new translation of the text by Brittain Smith, though I have also consulted Hollingdale's translation and made, here and there, my own modifications.

3 The sublime is employed in the following aphorisms of the text, with a concentration in book five: 33, 45, 169, 210, 423, 427, 435, 449, 459, 461, 542, 553, 570.

4 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. Ronald Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), hereafter *BT*.

transformed into mental images with which it is possible to live and in which the sublime represents the artistic taming of the dreadful and the ridiculous, the artistic discharge of the dreadful, and as the aesthetic concept of greatness in the unpublished materials of 1872-3 and the Untimelies[5], especially the second untimely on the uses and disadvantages for history of life, in which the lesson imparted is the need to "hold onto the sublime" (*das Festhalten des Erhabenen*).[6] In addition, Nietzsche appeals at this time to the sublime as a way of drawing attention to the narrowness of life, of discerning and judging that prevails in German scholarship, including its reliance on domestic and homely virtues, and he contrasts the elevation to greatness afforded by the sublime with what he calls "Philistine homeliness".[7] In his thinking on the birth of tragic thought Nietzsche is concerned with how the 'truth' of reality is *concealed*: the sublime (*das Erhabene*) and the ridiculous (or the comical) represent a step beyond the world of beautiful illusion since both contain a contradiction: "they are not at all congruent with truth: they are a *concealment* [*Umschleierung*] *of truth*".[8] In *Dawn* Nietzsche's concern with the sublime shifts as it is now implicated in the *disclosure* of reality: what has hitherto struck humankind as ugly is acknowledged and rendered a new source of beauty – we now have the chance to experience the beautiful in a new way and new experiences of elevation and exaltation are available to us.

Throughout book five of *Dawn*, Nietzsche, in accordance with the tradition stretching from Longinus to Kant, employs the sublime in connection with notions of elevation, exaltation, loftiness, ennoblement and the attainment of newly discovered heights of experience. At the same time it is bound up for him with practices of purification and sublimation that involve the conquest and overcoming of traditional and conventional conceptions of reality and of what is possible in experience. In the book Nietzsche is clearly mapping out a transitional humanity that is moving from a heritage of religions and moralities to something new,

5 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Unfashionable Observations*, trans. Richard T. Gray (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

6 *KSA*, 7, 19 [22], for further insight see Keith Ansell-Pearson, '"Holding on to the Sublime": Nietzsche on Philosophy's Perception and Search for Greatness', in Herman Siemens and Vasti Roodt (eds.), *Nietzsche, Power, and Politics* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), pp. 727-59.

7 *KSA* 1, pp. 778-82, especially pp. 779-80.

8 *KSA* 1, p. 595.

in fact, to uncharted conditions of existence. He is keen, as I will show, to militate against the sublime of dread and terror and to configure the sublime in a more modest and even humbling manner.[9] Experiences of awe and conceptions of greatness are still possible for human beings in Nietzsche's thinking but the human is no longer centre stage in the drama that is unfolding; indeed, the task is to overcome ourselves. One might suggest that the overhuman or superhuman is now our new limit and horizon. For Nietzsche, however, this is not to be conceived in terms of a large or inflated human but quite the opposite. There is to be both a new orientation for thinking and a new destiny for the human or what, in *Ecce Homo*[10], Nietzsche calls the event of a new purification and consecration.[11] This is foreshadowed in several aphorisms of book five of *Dawn*. In *D* 548 Nietzsche announces that the order of rank of greatness for all past mankind remains to be determined (the revaluation of values the book encourages permits this) and *D* 552 reflects on the meaning of the new purification and consecration.

The fundamental change or turning that Nietzsche is proposing finds expression in his metaphorical usage of the image of the sea.[12] The ocean is first appropriated for the sublime by Longinus who contrasts its awesome character with beautifully clear small streams.[13] This is then continued in Burke's association of the sublime with the experience of terror: "A level plain of a vast extent on land, is certainly no mean idea; the prospect of such a plain may be as extensive as a prospect of the ocean; but can it ever fill the mind with any thing so great as the ocean itself?"[14] The reason for this, according to Burke, is owing to the fact that

9 The link between the sublime and terror is, of course, the one made by Burke. See Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), part I, section VII and part II, section II.

10 *Ecce Homo*, trans. Duncan Large (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), hereafter *EH*.

11 *EH* III, 'The Birth of Tragedy', 4.

12 He makes extensive use of nautical metaphors in both *Dawn* and the two subsequent texts, *The Gay Science* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*; see Duncan Large, 'Nietzsche and the Figure of Columbus', (*Nietzsche-Studien*, 24, 1995), pp. 162-83.

13 Longinus, *On the Sublime*, trans. T. S. Dorsch (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965), chapter 35.

14 Burke 1998, part II, section II.

the ocean "is an object of no small terror" and for him terror is "the ruling principle of the sublime".[15] For Kant the "boundless ocean heaved up" is one example of several phenomena of nature where we see at work a dynamical sublime. Here nature is called sublime whenever it "elevates (*erhebt*) our imagination" by exhibiting cases in which the mind comes to feel its own sublimity, that is, in a vocation that elevates it "above nature".[16]

In his early writings Nietzsche employs the idea of the ocean to convey an astonishing philosophical insight into the reality of becoming, one that *initially* strikes mortal human beings as terrifying. He does this in his lecture on Heraclitus in the course at Basel on the pre-Platonics where he notes that confrontation with the insight into 'eternal becoming' has something at first sight that is both terrifying and uncanny: "the strongest comparison is to the sensation whereby someone in the middle of the ocean or during an earthquake, observes all things in motion". He then notes that it requires an "astonishing power to transmit the effects of the sublime [*des Erhabenen*] and joyful awe to those confronting it".[17] Heraclitus comes up with a "sublime image" (*erhabenes Gleichniss*) to do just this: "only in the play of the child (or that of the artist) does there exist a Becoming and Passing Away without any moralistic calculations".[18] It is not that we rise above nature and experience the superior power of human Reason, as in Kant; it is rather that we recognise nature, qua becoming, as the superior power and in 'play' we are one with its lack of teleology. In *Dawn* Nietzsche appears keen to replace the sublime of sheer terror with a new sublime of human self-conquest and overcoming in which the sea represents the uncharted future, the comprehensive space beyond familiar land in which the human can purify itself. Nietzsche makes this clear in both the prologue and several discourses in *Zarathustra*[19], which continues the main lessons of book five of *Dawn*: "In truth, the human is a polluted river. One must be a sea, to receive a polluted river and not be defiled. Behold, I teach you the

15 Ibid.

16 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis & Cambridge: Hackett, 1987), section 28.

17 *Nietzsche Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Fritz Bornmann (Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1995), IV. 2, hereafter *KGW*, p. 272.

18 Ibid., p. 278.

19 *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1969); trans. Graham Parkes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), hereafter *Z*.

Superhuman: he is this sea, in him your great contempt can go under"[20]; and, "There are a thousand paths that have never yet been trodden, a thousand forms of health and hidden islands of life. The human and the human's earth are still unexhausted and undiscovered".[21] The task of humanity overcoming itself consists in it freeing itself of its former sense of its (supra-terrestrial) meaning and destiny. The task now, we might say, is to remain true to the *earth*. Nietzsche advises us to go slowly and wisely:

> *Small doses*. – If you want to effect the most profound transformation possible, then administer the means in the smallest doses, but unremittingly and over long periods of time! What great things can be accomplished at one fell swoop? Thus we want to guard against exchanging head over heels and with acts of violence the moral condition we are used to for a new evaluation of things – no, we want to keep on living in that condition for a long, long time – until we, very late, presumably, become fully aware that the *new evaluation* has become the predominant force and that the small doses of it, *to which we will have to grow accustomed from now on*, have laid down in us a new nature.[22]

Dawn and the Dread of the Sublime

In one of the text's opening aphorisms Nietzsche argues that, "We must again rid the world of much *false* grandeur" (*Grossartigkeit*)[23] simply because "it offends against the justice which all things may lay claim to from us".[24] In fact, the task goes much deeper than this since we are in the process of unlearning an inherited symbolism. The task of purifying ourselves of this inheritance involves inquiring into the origins and sources of the sublime. This is something Nietzsche had already begun to

20 *Z*, Prologue 3.

21 *Z*, 'Of the Bestowing Virtue', 2.

22 *D*, 534; *KSA* 3.305.

23 The adjectival *grossartig* has the sense of the 'sublime' which should not be lost on the reader.

24 *D*, 4; *KSA* 3.20.

undertake in the previous text, *Human, all too Human*, where, for example, he had located the origins of the sublime in the religious cult.[25] Aphorism 33 of *Dawn* continues this inquiry. Here Nietzsche notes that for primitive humanity some evil chance event is interpreted in terms of a demonic power and caprice; there is no investigation into the natural causes of the phenomenon since the demonic cause is taken for granted. In this mental schema we have a demonic cause and a supernatural consequence, such as the punishments and mercies administered by the divinity, in which the sense for reality and taking pleasure in it is spoiled: reality only has value to the extent that "*it is capable of being a symbol*". It is, therefore, under the spell of the ancient morality of custom that man disdains the causes, the effects, and reality (*Wirklichkeit*) and "spins all his higher feelings of reverence, sublimity [or sublime exaltation] [Erhabenheit], pride, gratitude, and love *from an imaginary world*: the so-called higher world".[26] The results of the process are, Nietzsche thinks, perceptible today: "wherever a man's feelings are *exalted* [*erhebt*], the imaginary world is involved in some way". It is for this reason that today the scientific human being has to be suspicious of all higher feelings, so tremendously nourished are they by delusion and nonsense: "Not that they necessarily are or forever have to be: but of all the gradual purifications [*Reinigungen*] awaiting humanity, the purification of the higher feelings will no doubt be one of the most gradual".[27]

This reorientation of thinking, including of sublime states, guides Nietzsche's philosophical practice in 1880-1, and what inspires it is nothing other than the free spirited conscience. We can no longer simply trust our feelings since these are nothing original or final; behind feelings stand judgements and evaluations inherited in the form of feelings (inclinations and aversions): "Inspiration that stems from a feeling is the grandchild of a judgement – and often a wrong one! – and in any case, not a child of your own!"[28] Only our own reason and experience can

25 *Human, All too Human* (in two volumes), trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984). Includes *Assorted Opinions and Maxims* and *The Wanderer and His Shadow,* hereafter *HH,* 130.

26 *D*, 33; *KSA*, 3.42.

27 Ibid; 43.

28 *D*, 35.

replace the inherited obedience of ancestors and stand as a test of authenticity.[29]

In aphorism 45 of *Dawn* entitled 'A tragic ending for knowledge' (*Erkenntniss*) Nietzsche notes that it is human sacrifice that has traditionally served as the means of producing exaltation (*Erhebung*); this sacrifice has both elevated (*erhoben*) and exalted (*gehoben*) the human being. What if mankind were to now sacrifice itself: to whom would it make the sacrifice? Nietzsche suggests that it would be "the knowledge of truth" since only here could the goal be said to be commensurate with the sacrifice, "because for this goal no sacrifice is too great".[30] But this goal remains too distant and lofty; much closer to home is the task of working out the extent to which humanity can take steps towards the advancement of knowledge and ascertaining what kind of knowledge-drive could impel it to the point of extinction "with the light of an anticipatory wisdom in its eyes". But perhaps here we discover the madness of such a drive if divorced from human ends of cultivation and enhancement of itself into nobler and superior forms:

> Perhaps one day, once an alliance for the purpose of knowledge has been established with inhabitants of other planets and one has communicated one's knowledge from star to star for a few millennia: perhaps then enthusiasm [*Begeisterung*] for knowledge will swell to such a high tide![31]

The problem goes deep because from its history of exaltation humanity has developed within itself much self-abasement, self-hatred, and self-loathing. Nietzsche brings this out in a number of aphorisms. It is as if he is tracing a history of nihilism and pessimism through these insights into exaltation:

29 See also Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York, Random House, 1974), hereafter *GS*, 335.

30 See also on this *On the Genealogy of Morality*, trans. Carol Diethe (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006, second revised edition), hereafter *GM*, II. 7, in which Nietzsche notes that life has always known how to play tricks so as to justify itself, including its 'evil', and today, for us moderns and free spirits, this takes the form of "life as a riddle, life as a problem of knowledge".

31 *D*, 45; *KSA*, 3.52-3.

> *Belief in Intoxication* [*Rausch*] – Owing to the contrasts other states of consciousness present and to the wasteful squandering of nervous energy, people who live for exalted and enraptured moments [*erhabenen und verzückten Augenblicke*] are usually wretched and disconsolate; they view those moments as their true self and the misery and despair as the *effect of everything 'outside the self'*; thus the thought of their environment, their age, their entire world fills them with vengeful emotions. Intoxication counts for them as the true life, as the real self... Humanity has these rapturous drunkards to thank for a great deal of evil: for they are insatiable sowers of the weeds of dissatisfaction with self and neighbour, of disdain for this world and this time, especially of world-weariness. Perhaps a whole Hell of *criminals* could not muster an impact as sinister and uncanny, as oppressive and ruinous of earth and air into the farthest future as that tiny, noble community of intractable, half-mad fantasists, people of genius which cannot control themselves and who take all possible pleasure in themselves only at the point where they have completely lost themselves...[32]

Nietzsche is dealing with a problem that preoccupies him in book five and throughout the 1880s: the problem of fanaticism.[33] As he notes, such 'enthusiasts' will seek to implant the faith in intoxication as "as being that which is actually living in life: a dreadful faith!"[34] Such is the extent of Nietzsche's anxiety that he wonders whether humanity as a whole will one day perish by its "spiritual fire-waters" and those who keep alive the desire for them. Nietzsche is advising us to be on our guard, to be vigilant as philosophers against, "the half-mad, the fantastic, the fanatical", including so-called human beings of genius who claim to have 'visions' and to have seen things others do not see. We are to be cautious, not credulous, when confronted with the claims of visions, that is to say he adds, "of a profound mental disturbance..."[35]

32 *D*, 50; *KSA*, 3.54-5.

33 See also *GS* 347; *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. and ed. Marion Faber (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), hereafter *BGE*, 10.

34 Ibid.

35 *D*, 66; *KSA*, 3.64.

Humanity has attempted to short-circuit the paths to truth and virtue, so we must be harder, aim higher, and demand more of ourselves. In an aphorism entitled 'The Integrity of God' (*Die Redlichkeit Gottes*) he writes: "All religions reveal a trace of the fact that they owe their origin [*Herkunft*] to an early, immature intellectuality in humanity – they all take with astonishing *levity* the obligation to tell the truth; as yet, they know nothing of a *duty on the part of God* to be truthful towards humanity and clear in His communication."[36] In *D* 456, which appears in book five, '*Redlichkeit*' (honesty, integrity, probity) is said for good reason to be mankind's "youngest virtue".[37] Consider also in this regard the aphorisms 59-61. Nietzsche notes, quite seriously, that Christianity has wanted to free human beings from the *burden* of the demands of morality by showing a shorter way to perfection, perhaps imitating philosophers who wanted a 'royal road to truth' that would avoid wearisome and tedious dialectics or the gathering of rigorously tested facts. In both cases a profound error is at work even though such an error has provided comfort to those caught exhausted and despairing in the wilderness of existence.[38] Christianity for Nietzsche can fairly be called a "very *spirited* religion" that has made European humanity something sharp-witted and not only theologically cunning. It is this sharp-wittedness he will build on himself for the task of revaluation and the "self-sublimation of morality":[39]

> In this spirit, and in league with the powers that be and often the deepest honesty [*Ehrlichkeit*] of devotion, it has *chiselled out* the most refined figures ever yet to exist in human society: the figures of the higher and highest Catholic priesthood, especially when they have descended from a noble race and, from the outset, brought with them an inborn grace of gesture, commanding eyes, and beautiful hands and feet.[40]

36 *D*, 91; *KSA*, 3.84-5.

37 See also *Z*, 'Of the Afterworldsmen'; and for more on honesty in book five, see *D*, 482, 511, 536, 543, 556. 'There have always been many sickly people among those who invent fables and long for God: they have a raging hate for the enlightened human being and for that youngest of virtues which is called honesty' (*Redlichkeit*), *Z*, 'Of the Afterworldsmen'.

38 *D*, 59.

39 *D*, Preface 4.

40 *D*, 60; *KSA*, 3.60.

The creation of a mode of life which tames the beast in man, which is the noble end of Christianity, has succeeded in keeping awake 'the feeling of a superhuman [*übermenschlichen*] mission' in the soul and in the body. Here one takes pride in obeying which, Nietzsche notes, is the distinguishing mark of all aristocrats. It is with their 'surpassing beauty and refinement' that the princes of the church prove to the people the church's 'truth' and which is itself the result of a harmony between figure, spirit, and task. Nietzsche then asks whether this attempt at an aristocratic harmony must also go to the grave with the end of religions: "can nothing higher be attained, or even imagined?"[41] When Nietzsche invites in the next aphorism sensitive people who are still Christians from the heart to attempt for once the experiment of living without Christianity he is once again in search of an authentic mode of life: "they owe it to *their faith* in this way for once to sojourn 'in the wilderness' – if only to win for themselves the right to a voice on the question whether Christianity is necessary. For the present they cling to their native soil and thence revile the world beyond it..."[42] After such a wandering beyond his little corner of existence, a Christian may return home, not out of homesickness, but out of sound and honest judgement. Nietzsche sees here a model for future human beings who will one day live in this way with respect to all evaluations of the past: "one must voluntarily *live through* them once again, and likewise their opposite – in order, in the final analysis, to have the *right* to let them fall through the sieve".[43]

Nietzsche brings book one of *Dawn* to a close by suggesting that Europe remains behind Indian culture in terms of the progress it needs to make with respect to religious matters. He suggests that it has not yet attained the 'free-minded [*freisinnige*] naiveté' of the Brahmins. The priests of India demonstrated 'pleasure in thinking' in which observances – prayers, ceremonies, sacrifices, and hymns – are celebrated as the givers of all good things. One step further, he adds, and one also throws aside the gods – "which is what Europe will also have to do one day".[44] Europe remains distant, he muses, from the level of culture attained in the appearance of the Buddha, the teacher of 'self-redemption'. Nietzsche anticipates an age when all the observances and customs of the old

41 Ibid., 61.
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid., 62.
44 *D*, 96; *KSA*, 3.87.

moralities and religions have come to an end, but instead of speculating on what will then emerge into existence, he instead calls for a new community of non-believers to make their sign and communicate with one another: "There exists today among the different nations of Europe perhaps ten to twenty million people who no longer 'believe in God' – is it too much to ask that they *give a sign* to one another?" He imagines these people constituting a new power in Europe, between nations, classes, rulers and subjects, and between the un-peaceable and the most peaceable. It is with this attitude towards the future that Nietzsche approaches aspects of the new sublime, as well as what he calls the "sublimities of philosophy", in book five of the text.

The Sea, the Sea

Book five begins with an aphorism on 'In the great silence' which stages an encounter with the sea. The scene Nietzsche depicts is one of stillness and solitude: "Here is the sea, here we can forget the city". After the noisy ringing of bells announcing the angelus[45], which produce the sad and foolish yet sweet noise that divides night and day, all becomes still and the sea lies pale and shimmering but unable or unwilling to speak; similarly, the night sky plays its everlasting evening game with red and yellow and green but chooses not to speak. We are encompassed on all sides by a "tremendous muteness" that is both lovely and dreadful and at which the heart swells. But is there not hypocrisy in this silent beauty? Nietzsche invites us to ask. Would it not speak well and evilly if it so wished? Would it not mock our feeling of sympathy (*Mitgefühl*) with it? A voice, Nietzsche's voice, then interrupts and declares, "so be it! I am not ashamed of being mocked by such powers".[46] This voice pities nature for its silence and on account of the malice that ties its tongue. In this scene the heart, the regulating source of life's blood flow, continues to swell and is startled by "a new truth": "*it too cannot speak*, it too mocks when the mouth calls something into this beauty, it too enjoys its sweet

45 Since the fourteenth century Catholic churches sounded a bell at morning, noon, and evening as reminder to recite Ave Maria, the prayer which celebrates the annunciation of the birth of Christ to Mary by the angel Gabriel. Note by translator of *Dawn*, Brittain Smith.
46 *D*, 423; *KSA*, 3.259.

silent malice".[47] The voice begins to hate speech and even thinking for behind every word it hears the error of laughter, of imagination, and delusion. Should one not, then, mock at one's pity and at one's mockery? What riddle of existence are we caught up in? Has not all become dark for the philosophy of the morning? The aphorism concludes as follows:

> O sea! O evening! You are terrible mentors! You teach the human being to *cease* being human! Ought he to sacrifice himself to you? Ought he to become as you are now, pale, shimmering, mute, monstrous [*ungeheuer*], reposing above himself? Sublimely above himself? [*Über sich selber erhaben*][48]

What sublime state is it that the human being might attain here? How can the human being cease being itself? Is this what has really taken place in this experience? What is the becoming contained within it? Later aphorisms in the book serve to clarify Nietzsche's meaning. I shall come to them shortly. The reader has good reason to pause and reflect on what might be being expressed in the aphorism. Nietzsche's instruction is never simple or straightforward; there is always ambiguity in it. One response might be to suggest that the encounter with the sea challenges the human and its sense of scale and measure, confronting it with something immense and monstrous, perhaps the source of life as the source of the sublime. But here we have to be careful because of the 'mockery' which greets us in the experience. All the names we might come up with to describe the mute sea will come back to us: profound, eternal, mysterious. Are we not endowing the sea with our own names and virtues?[49] Do we ever escape the net of language, ever escape the human?[50]

47 Ibid., 259-60.

48 Ibid., 260.

49 See *Z* II, 'The Dance Song': "Into your eye I looked of late, O Life! And into the unfathomable I seemed them to be sinking. But you pulled me out with a golden fishing-rod; mockingly you laughed when I called you unfathomable. "So runs the talk of all fishes", you said; "What *they* do not fathom is unfathomable. But changeable am I only and wild in all things, a woman and not a virtuous one"."

50 See *D*, 117 entitled 'In prison', which ends: "We sit within our net, we spiders, and whatever we may catch in it, we catch nothing at all except that which allows itself to be caught precisely in *our* net".

The basic contrast Nietzsche is making in the aphorism is between stillness and noise (sea and city): in our encounter with the sea, it might be suggested, we quieten our being, become calm and contemplative, think about more than the here and now, the merely fleeting and transient. In *D* 485 Nietzsche has 'B' state: "It seems I need distant perspectives to think well of things". If in *Human, all too Human* Nietzsche had urged his readers to renounce the first and last things and devote instead their energy and attentiveness to the closest things, the distant things, including distant times return in *Dawn*, perhaps prompted by an encounter with the sea. *D* 441 entitled 'Why what is closest becomes ever more distant' captures this new sense of perspective: "The more we think about everything that we were and will be, the paler what we are right now becomes...We grow more solitary – and indeed *because* the whole flood of humanity resounds around us".[51]

We have reason to pause because of the reference to the 'evening'. The dawn-philosophy is a philosophy of the morning and, as such, it has its suspicions about thoughts that come to us in the evening. Several aphorisms in book five address this point. In aphorism 539, for example, Nietzsche draws attention to how our 'seeing' of the world is coloured by different emotions and moods at different hours of the day: "Doesn't your morning shine upon things differently from your evening?"[52] Aphorism 542 begins with Nietzsche declaring that: "It is not wise to let evening judge the day: for all too often weariness then becomes the judge of energy, success, and good will".[53] My view is that Nietzsche wishes this encounter of the sea to take place but from it the human is not to cancel itself out of existence but go out of itself and then return to itself anew or afresh. For Nietzsche there are different ways of seeing, some more human than others and some which are superhuman.[54] The encounter with sea and evening serves to inspire us to think about these different ways of seeing; we no longer only inhabit the day with its ordinary, prosaic

51 *D*, 441; *KSA*, 3.269.

52 *D*, 539; *KSA*, 3.308.

53 *D*, 542; 3.309-10. Nietzsche may have been inspired in these reflections by Schopenhauer: "For the morning is the youth of the day; everything is bright, fresh, and easy; we feel strong and have at our complete disposal all our faculties...Evening, on the other hand, is the day's old age; at such a time we are dull, garrulous, and frivolous...For night imparts to everything its black colour" (Schopenhauer 19774: volume one, pp. 434-35).

54 This is what he calls 'pure seeing'; see also *D*, 426 on the "richer form of seeing".

consciousness. There is another voice even if that voice be silence and our own echo.

After the opening aphorism the next two aphorisms[55] consider truth and error and amplify what has been highlighted in the book's opening aphorism: the 'problem' of the human is that it is an erring animal and dwells in the space of error. In 424 Nietzsche notes that errors have hitherto served as forces of consolation for humanity (errors of human judgement regarding freedom of the will, the unity of the world, the character of time, and so on). If today we are seekers of truth and idealists of knowledge may we not, then, expect the same from truth? But can truths be capable of producing the effect of consolation? Is it not in the nature of truth precisely not to console? If human beings exist as truthful beings but employ philosophy as therapy in the sense of seeking a cure for themselves, does this not suggest that they are not, in fact, seeking truth at all? But if the character of truth as a whole is one that makes us ill should we not abolish it in the same way the Greeks abolished gods once they were unable to offer consolation?

In 425 Nietzsche spells out the reason for our ambivalent stance towards errors. On the one hand it is on their basis that humanity has been elevated and has excelled itself again and again, for example, through errors as to its descent, uniqueness, and destiny. On the other hand, it has to be noted that it is through the same errors that unspeakable amounts of suffering, persecution, suspicion, and misery have come into the world. Our moralities do not wed us to the earth as a site of dwelling and thinking; rather, we consider ourselves "too good and too significant for the earth", as if we were paying it only a passing visit. The "proud sufferer" has thus become in the course of human development the highest type of human being that is revered.

Nietzsche clearly wishes to see much, if not all of this, overturned, but in the name of what and for what ends? Aphorism 501, entitled 'Mortal souls', offers a partial clarification and suggests that it is our terrestrial heritage and conditions of existence that will now constitute our new horizon and limit. In this aphorism Nietzsche seems to be suggesting that it is a question of relearning both knowledge and the human, including human time as mortal time. Clearly, this complicates our conception of what the sublime will now mean for us, that is, the experiences of

55 Ibid., 424-425.

elevation and exaltation. When we gaze out to sea and encounter its great muteness what is it we experience and of what is it we would want to speak? No definitive answers can be given or need to be given at this point in time or evolution; rather, we are caught in a waiting game, one in which we can 'freely' orient ourselves:

> With regard to knowledge [*Erkenntniss*] the most useful accomplishment is perhaps: that the belief in the immortality of the soul has been abandoned. Now humanity is allowed to wait; now it no longer needs to rush headlong into things and choke down half-examined ideas as formerly it was forced to do. For in those days the salvation of poor 'eternal souls' depended on the extent of their knowledge acquired during a short lifetime; they had to *make a decision* overnight – 'knowledge' took on a dreadful importance.[56]

Nietzsche argues we are now in a new situation with regard to knowledge and as a result we can conquer anew our courage for mistakes, for experimentation, and for accepting things provisionally. Without the sanction of the old moralities and religions individuals and entire generations, "can now fix their eyes on tasks of a vastness that would to earlier ages have seemed madness".[57] Humanity has now earned the right to self-experimentation. Our sacrifices henceforth will be to knowledge.

Aphorism 507 entitled 'Against the tyranny of the true' signals a warning, however, concerning our devotion to knowledge through experimentation. Here Nietzsche stages an anxiety that takes on a more dramatic form in his later writings, notably the third essay of the *Genealogy* and its questioning of the will to truth. Of course, this is something that has in fact been a feature of his thinking on the mode of the tragic – for example, the need to will illusion – from the beginning. In this aphorism he asks why it should be considered desirable that truth alone should rule and be omnipotent. We can esteem it as a 'great power' but we should not allow it to rule over us in some tyrannical fashion. Much healthier is to allow truth to have opponents and for us to find relief from it from time to time, and be at liberty to reside knowingly in 'untruth'. Failure to place truth within a rich economy of life will make

56 *D*, 501; *KSA*, 3.294.
57 Ibid.

truth, and ourselves in the process, "boring, powerless, and tasteless".[58] In the next work, *The Gay Science*, the first three books of which Nietzsche initially conceived as a continuation of *Dawn*, Nietzsche focuses on the task of the *incorporation* (*Einverleibung*) of truth and knowledge and holds this to be our new experiment.[59]

A number of questions and doubts might emerge from Nietzsche's outline of this new set of tasks for humanity. Let's accept that we wish to learn to know and become genuine knowers even if, as the preface to the *Genealogy* says, we are knowers who are in fact *unknown* to ourselves.[60] But does this mean and must it mean always as *human* knowers? Would this not mean always playing a part in the same comedy and never being able to see into things except through the same pair of eyes? Might there not be beings with different eyes and better equipped for knowledge? Moreover, if we are condemned to see only with human eyes and to know with human minds does this not signal in fact the *impossibility* of knowledge? As Nietzsche rhetorically puts it, do we come to know at the end of all our knowledge only our own organs?[61] Will this not lead to misery and disgust with ourselves? These are the questions Nietzsche considers in aphorism 483 and his answer to them provides one clue as to his conception of the image of the sea that the final book of the text starts with. He suggests that even when it proves to be the case that our search for knowledge returns us always to ourselves this does not mean that new knowledge is not to be had, for even here we have a form of being that remains largely unknown and unexplored:

> This is a wicked attack – *reason* is attacking you! But tomorrow you will be right back in the midst of knowing [*Erkennen*] again and so also in the midst of unreason, by which I mean: in the *pleasure* [*Lust*] of being human. Let us go down to the sea![62]

The question pops up: why would we, from this experience, go down to the sea? Would we encounter there only ourselves, or perhaps a challenge to ourselves that would lead us to discover ourselves – and the world –

58 *D*, 507; *KSA*, 3.297.
59 *GS*, 110.
60 *GM*, Preface, 1.
61 *D*, 483; see also *BGE*, 15.
62 *D*, 483; *KSA*, 3.287; see also *D*, 539.

anew? For are we not fundamentally at the core unknown to ourselves? Contra the tendency towards self-loathing, then, Nietzsche is advising us that there are good reasons for taking pleasure or delight in our continuing human-ness. We have reasons to be cheerful and this occupies Nietzsche in aphorism 551 'Of future virtues'.

In this aphorism Nietzsche argues that the more comprehensible the world becomes for us, then the more solemnities of every kind have a chance to decrease. In short, through knowledge we can conquer the fear and anxiety that has gripped previous humanity and taught it to kneel down before the incomprehensible and beg for mercy. But is there not attached to this process of enlightenment a corresponding loss of charm about the world and, through the courageousness of our new ways of thinking, a loss of respect for the world and for ourselves? How we will now be stimulated by life? Will the passion of knowledge not implant in future humanity a death-drive? Nihilism is perhaps on the horizon of Nietzsche's thinking at this time but the concept of it does not as yet make its appearance in his writings. The danger he contemplates is that the courage in thinking will advance so far that it will reach a point of supreme arrogance where it considers itself to be above humanity and any concern with human things and problems. This would be a sublime of the sage who sees himself and existence as things farthest beneath him. But where there is danger there is also promise, and Nietzsche invites us to entertain the thought that this species of courage, which is not far from being 'an excessive magnanimity', might produce a new species of seers who not only look down on humanity and existence from a great lofty height but also communicate to us about the domain of the possible and new possibilities of life. In short, Nietzsche is keen to promote the 'cheerful' philosophy of the morning which is focused on the hope of new dawns, new modes of living, and new ideals. If there are reasons for nihilism there are also equally good reasons for its exact opposite:

> If only they wanted to let us experience in advance something of the *future virtues*! Or of virtues that will never exist on earth, although they could exist somewhere in the world – of purple – glowing galaxies and the whole Milky Ways of the beautiful! Where are you, you astronomers of the ideal?[63]

63 *D*, 551; *KSA*, 3.322.

Nietzsche does not align his thinking with the cause of spreading fear or terror but instead commits himself to expanding our appreciation of the beautiful:

> The pessimist, who gives all things the blackest and gloomiest colours, makes use of only flames and bolts of lightning, celestial effulgence, and everything that has glaring brilliance and confuses the eye; brightness is only there for him to increase the horror [*Entsetzen*] and to make us sense that things are more terrifying [*Schreckliches*] than they really are.[64]

Just as several aphorisms address the sublime in book five so do almost an equal number attend to questions of beauty, the beautiful and the ugly. In aphorism 469 entitled 'The realm of beauty is bigger' Nietzsche suggests that new appreciations of beauty are becoming possible now that we no longer accept the limitation of restricting beauty to the morally good: "Just as surely as evil people have a hundred types of happiness about which the virtuous have no clue, they also have a hundred types of beauty: and many have not yet been discovered".[65] In aphorism 550 on 'Knowledge and Beauty' Nietzsche suggests a reorientation in our thinking about beauty and reality. He notes that hitherto people have reserved their veneration and feeling of happiness for works of imagination and dissemblance (*Verstellung*) whilst the opposite phenomena leave them cold. Pleasure or delight is taken only by plunging into the depths of semblance (*Schein*) and by taking leave of reality. This developed taste for semblance and appearance over reality has encouraged the aesthetic attitude that takes reality (*Wirklichkeit*) to be something ugly. Contra this development Nietzsche suggests that knowledge of the ugliest reality can be something beautiful for us and the discovery of reality – which is what we 'idealists of knowledge' inquiring into existence are doing – generates for us so many subtle pleasures. Do we not need to ask whether the 'beautiful in itself' makes any sense?

> The happiness of those who seek knowledge increases the amount of beauty in the world and makes everything that is here sunnier; knowledge does not merely place its beauty around things but, in the long run, into things – may future humanity bear witness to this proposition!...What danger for their honesty [*Redlichkeit*] of becoming, through this enjoyment, a panegyrist of things![66]

64 *D* 561; *KSA*, 3.327.
65 *D* 468; *KSA*, 3.281.

On the Sublimities of Philosophy

In a number of aphorisms scattered throughout book five of *Dawn* Nietzsche configures the operations of philosophy in relation to the sublime and reflects on its own sublimities. Philosophy's love of knowledge – and to be a lover of knowledge is for Nietzsche to be an essentially unrequited lover – now develops as a form of passion which shrinks at no sacrifice. In aphorism 429 he notes that our drive to knowledge has become so strong for us that we now cannot tolerate the idea of happiness without knowledge: "Restless discovering and divining has such an attraction for us, and has grown as indispensable to us as is to the lover his unrequited love..."[67] We now honestly believe, Nietzsche writes, that "under the pressure and suffering of this passion the whole of humanity must believe itself to be more sublime [*sich erhabener*] and more consoled than previously, when it had not yet overcome its envy of the cruder pleasure and contentment that result from barbarism".[68] We even entertain the thought that humanity might perish of its newfound passion for knowledge, though clearly Nietzsche is not an advocate of this. As he notes, such a thought can hold no sway over us. Our evolution is now bound up with this passion, however, and the task is to allow ourselves to be ennobled and elevated by it: "...if humanity is not destroyed by a *passion* it will be destroyed by a *weakness*: which does one prefer? This is the main question. Do we desire for humanity an end in fire and light or in sand?"[69]

In aphorism 427 Nietzsche employs the sublime to address what philosophy now means and does in relation to the emerging science (*Wissenschaft*) of knowledge. He draws a comparison with rococo horticulture which arose from the feeling that nature is ugly, savage, and

66 *D* 550; *KSA*, 3.320-1; see also 433, 513, 515.
67 *D*, 429; *KSA*, 3.264
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.; *KSA*, 3.265; see also *D*, 435 on perishing as a "*sublime ruin*" (*erhabene Trümmer*) and not as a "molehill".

boring and thus the aim was to beautify it. This is now what philosophy does with science, beautifying what strikes us as ugly, dry, cheerless, and laborious.[70] Philosophy is a species of art and poetry and thus a form of 'entertainment': it wants to entertain "but, in accordance with its inherited pride, it wants to do this in a more sublime and elevated manner" (*in einer erhabenen und höheren Art*) and before a select audience.[71] Nietzsche already has here, then, the conception of the project of the '*gay* science' with its mixture of poetry, song, the philosophical aphorism, and dedication to science. In this aphorism from *Dawn* Nietzsche speaks of philosophy enabling us to wander in science as in 'wild nature' and without effort or boredom. Such an ambition for philosophy is one that makes religion, hitherto the highest species of the art of entertainment, superfluous. Eventually a cry of dissent against philosophy may emerge, one voiced by pure scientism and naturalism: "'back to science", to the nature and naturalness of science!" At this point, Nietzsche notes, an age of humanity's history may then commence that discovers the mightiest beauty in precisely the wild and ugly sides of science, "just as it was only from the time of Rousseau that one discovered a sense for the beauty of high mountains and the desert".[72] In short, Nietzsche can see no good reason why humanity cannot grow in strength and insight with science: even when science deflates it, humanity can experience an elevation above itself and the nature of this elevation is best thought about in the clear light of day.

In aphorism 449 Nietzsche appeals to the 'spiritually needy' and considers how the new tasks and new modes of knowledge suppose solitude as their condition. He imagines a time for higher festivals when one freely gives away one's spiritual house and possessions to ones in need. In this condition of solitude the satiated soul lightens the burden of its own soul, eschewing both praise for what it does and avoiding gratitude which is invasive and fails to respect solitude and silence. This is to speak of a new kind of teacher who, armed with a handful of

70 See also *Z* I, 'Of War and Warriors': "Are you ugly? Very well, my brothers! Take the sublime (*das Erhabene*) about you, the mantle of the ugly!".

71 *D,* 427; *KSA*, 3.263.

72 *D,* 427; *KSA*, 3.263. On Rousseau's creation of a new and original emotion compare Henri Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, trans. R. Ashley Audra & Cloudesley Brereton (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), pp. 41-2.

knowledge and a bag full of experiences, becomes "a doctor of the spirit to the indigent and to aid people here and there whose head *is disturbed by opinions*..."[73] The aim is not to prove that one is right before such a person but, rather, "to speak with him in such a way that...he himself says what is right and, proud of the fact, walks away!" Such a teacher exists like a beacon of light offering illumination. Nietzsche imagines this teacher existing in the manner of a new kind of Stoic and inspired by a new sublime:

> To have no advantage, neither better food, nor purer air, nor a more joyful spirit – but to share, to give back, to communicate, to grow poorer! To be able to be humble so as to be accessible to many and humiliating to none! To have experienced much injustice and have crawled through the worm-tunnels of every kind of error in order to be able to reach many hidden souls along their secret paths! Always in a type of love and a type of self-interest and self-enjoyment! To be in possession of a dominion and at the same time inconspicuous and renouncing! To lie constantly in the sun and the kindness of grace and yet to know that the paths rising to the sublime [*zum Erhabenen*] are right at hand! – That would be a life! That would be a reason to live, to live a long time.[74]

In this new mode of life one is strengthened and encouraged by the promise of the sublime and with a love that at one and the same time centres on ourselves and yet freely gives to others. Interestingly, in his treatment of the ancient Greeks Nietzsche had viewed tragic art as the means by which a people had conquered a world-weary pessimism (e.g. the wisdom of Silenus) and to the point where they loved life to such an extent that they wanted long lives. The pain and suffering of life no longer counted as an objection but became the grounds of a beautifying and sublime transfiguration of existence. In book five of *Dawn* he is now envisaging how such comportment towards life can exist for us modern free spirits who have renounced so much (God, religion, the first and last things, romantic music, and so on). In D 440 Nietzsche in fact raises the question whether the philosopher of the morning is really renouncing things or gaining a new cheerfulness or serenity:

73 *D,* 449; *KSA*, 3.272.

74 Ibid.

> To relinquish the world without knowing it, like a *nun* – that leads to an infertile, perhaps melancholic solitude. This has nothing in common with the solitude of the thinker's *vita contemplativa*: when he elects *it*, he in no way wishes to renounce; on the contrary, it would amount to renunciation, melancholy, downfall of his self for him to have to endure the *vita practica*: he relinquishes the latter because he knows it, knows himself. Thus he leaps into *his* water, thus he attains *his* serenity.[75]

For the thinker who now has the new dedication to knowledge and can recognise the extent of its future-oriented character – it is such because the discoveries of knowledge always run ahead of a humanity that in time will seek to become equal to it – existence is lived magnanimously. In aphorism 459 entitled 'The thinker's magnanimity' Nietzsche writes:

> Rousseau and Schopenhauer – both were proud enough to inscribe upon their existence the motto: *vitam impendere vero* ('to dedicate one's life to truth'). And again – how they both must have suffered in their pride that they could not succeed in making *verum impendere vitae!* ('to dedicate truth to life') – *verum*, as each of them understood it – in that their lives tagged along beside their knowledge like a temperamental bass that refuses to stay in tune with the melody! But knowledge would be in a sorry state if it was meted out to every thinker only as it suited his person! And thinkers would be in a sorry state if their vanity were so great that they could only endure this! The great thinker's most beautiful virtue radiates precisely from: the magnanimity with which he, as a person of knowledge [*Erkennender*], undauntedly, often shamed, often with sublime mockery [*mit erhabenem Spotte*] and smiling – offers himself and his life in sacrifice.[76]

Neither Rousseau nor Schopenhauer, Nietzsche is arguing, were cognitively mature enough to allow for knowledge and life to enter into a new marriage in which knowledge elevates and pulls life up with it: their

75 *D*, 440; *KSA*, 3.269.
76 *D*, 459; *KSA*, 3.276.

emotional personalities interfered too much to permit this process to take place.[77]

We can contrast this with the depiction Nietzsche provides of the likes of Plato, Spinoza, and Goethe in aphorism 497 entitled 'The purifying eye'.[78] In the genius of these natures we find a spirit that is only loosely bound to character and temperament, "like a winged essence that can separate itself from the latter and soar high above them".[79] Nietzsche then contrasts this genius with another kind, namely, those thinkers who boast of it but who in fact have never escaped from their temperament, and he gives as an example the case of Schopenhauer. Such geniuses are unable to fly above and beyond themselves but only ever encounter themselves wherever they fly. Nietzsche does not deny that such genius can amount to greatness, but he is keen to point out that what they lack is that which is to be truly prized – "the *pure, purifying eye*". Such an eye is not restricted in its vision by the partial sightedness created by character and temperament and can gaze at the world "as if it were a god, a god it loves". Although these geniuses are teachers of 'pure seeing', Nietzsche is keen to stress that such seeing requires apprenticeship and long practice. In aphorism 542 on 'The philosopher and old age' Nietzsche offers a warning about the noblest kind of genius such as we find in Plato. This consists in having belief in one's own genius to the point where the thinker permits himself the right to decree rather than to prove. In effect

77 On Schopenhauer compare Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, trans. Peter Winch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 36e: "Schopenhauer is quite a *crude* mind, one might say. I.e. though he has refinement, this suddenly becomes exhausted at a certain level and then he is as crude as the crudest. Where real depth starts, his comes to an end. One could say of Schopenhauer: he never searches his conscience".

78 See also *Z* I, 'Of the Tree of the Mountainside': "The free human of the spirit, too, must purify himself. Much of the prison the rottenness still remains within him: his eye still has to become pure". Ironically perhaps, Schopenhauer's own insight into Goethe seems to anticipate Nietzsche: "Such a life, therefore, exalts the man and sets him above fate and its fluctuations. It consists in constant thinking, learning, experimenting, and practising, and gradually becomes the chief existence to which the personal is subordinated as the mere means to an end. An example of the independent and separate nature of this intellectual life is furnished by Goethe," Arthur Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena* (in two volumes), trans. E. F. J. Payne (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1974), volume two, p. 75.

79 *D*, 497; *KSA*, 3.292.

the thinker has reached a state of spiritual fatigue and chooses to enjoy the results of their thinking instead of testing them out again and again. At this point the old thinker believes he has elevated (*erhebt*) himself above his life's work when in actuality he has infused his thought with rhapsodies, poetic fog and mystic lights.[80] Such a thinker wants to found institutions that will bear his name and no longer build new edifices of thought. He wants to create a legacy with "confirmed party supporters, unproblematic and safe comrades", coming close to inventing a religion in order to have community and have himself canonized. Nietzsche notes poignantly: "Whenever a great thinker wants to turn himself into a binding institution for the future of humankind, one may be certain that he is past the peak of his powers and is very weary, very close to the setting of his sun".[81]

It is clear that for Nietzsche true genius is something extremely rare simply because so few can free themselves from their temperaments and character.[82] Most of us see existence through a veil or cloak and this occupies his attention in aphorism 539. He challenges us to reflect on whether we are in fact suited for knowing what is true or not. Our mind may be too dull and our vision too crude to permit us access to such knowledge. He runs through the many subjective elements of our perception and vision of the world, how, for example, we are often on the look out for something that affects us strongly and at other times for something that calms us because we are tired: "Always full of secret predeterminations as to *how* the truth would have to be constituted if you, precisely you, were able to accept it!"[83] To attain objectivity of perception and vision is hard for human beings – to be just towards something requires from us warmth and enthusiasm, and the loveable and hateful ego appears to be always present – and may in fact be only attainable in degrees.[84] We may, then, have good reasons for living in fear of our own

80 *D,* 542; *KSA,* 3.311.

81 Ibid.

82 Nietzsche's conception of the genius surely has affinities with Schopenhauer who defines genius as "the highest degree of the *objectivity* of knowledge" (this knowledge is a synthesis of perception and imagination and found in a rare state and abnormal individuals) (Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation* (in two volumes), trans. E. F. J. Payne (New York: Dover, 1966), volume two, 292; see also chapter XXXI.

83 *D,* 539; *KSA,* 3.308.

84 See also *GM* III. 12.

ghost: "In the cavern of every type of knowledge, are you not afraid once more of running into your own ghost, the ghost that is the cloak [*verkleidet*] in which truth has disguised itself from you?"[85] For Nietzsche both Goethe and Schopenhauer are geniuses: the difference is that one is more capable than the other of 'pure seeing' and hence more profound.

In aphorism 547 on the 'Tyrants of the spirit' Nietzsche suggests that we should no longer feel the need to rush knowledge along to some end point. There is no longer the need, he holds, to approach questions and experiments as if the solutions to them had to correspond to a typical human time span. We are now free to take our time and go slowly: "To solve everything at one fell swoop, with one single word – that was the secret wish: this was the task one imagined in the image of the Gordian knot or of Columbus' egg; one did not doubt that in the realm of knowledge as well, it was possible to reach one's goal after the manner of an Alexander or a Columbus and to solve all questions with *one* answer".[86] The idea evolved that there was a riddle to solve for the philosopher and that the task was to compress the problem of the world into the simplest riddle-form: "The boundless ambition and jubilation of being the 'unriddler of the world' were the stuff of thinker's dreams".[87] Under such a schema of the task of thinking philosophy assumed the guise of being a supreme struggle for the tyrannical rule of spirit reserved for a single individual (Nietzsche thinks that it is Schopenhauer who has most recently fancied themselves as such an individual). The lesson to be drawn from this inheritance is that the quest for knowledge has been retarded by the moral narrow-mindedness of its disciples; in the future, Nietzsche declares, "it must be pursued with a higher and more magnanimous basic feeling: "What do I matter!" stands over the door of the future thinker".[88]

In aphorism 553 Nietzsche directly addresses the question of the direction of this new philosophy of the morning: where is it headed with all its detours? He himself raises the suspicion that it may be little more than the translation into reason of a concentrated drive, "for mild sunshine, clearer and fresher air, southerly vegetation, sea air, transient digests of meat, eggs, and fruit, hot water to drink, daylong silent

85 Ibid.

86 *D,* 547; *KSA,* 3.317.

87 Ibid; 318.

88 Ibid.

wanderings...almost soldierly habits", and so on. In short, is it a philosophy "that at bottom is the instinct for a personal diet" and hygiene, one that suits a particular idiosyncratic taste and for whom it alone is beneficial?[89] He continues:

> An instinct that is searching for my own air, my own heights, my own weather, my own type of health, through the detour of my head? There are many other and certainly more loftier sublimities [*höhere Erhabenheiten*] of philosophy and not just those that are more gloomy and more ambitious than mine – perhaps they too are, each and every one, nothing than intellectual detours for these kinds of personal drives? – In the meantime [*Inzwischen*] I observe with new eyes the secret and solitary swarming of a butterfly high on the rocky seashore where many good plants are growing; it flies about, untroubled that it only has one more day yet to live and that the night will be too cold for its winged fragility. One could certainly come up with a philosophy for it as well: although it is not likely to be mine.[90]

Although Nietzsche can observe and appreciate the butterfly in a new way, as he now can all things of nature, its mode of life is too simple and untroubled in contrast to the philosophy of life his search is opening up, which is one of deep and troubled fascination and with ever-new peaks of elevation.

Conclusion

Kant chose the figure of Copernicus to depict his philosophical revolution. Nietzsche selects the figure of a new Columbus to promote the new orientation for thinking being outlined in his middle period work. With the disorientating event of the death of God that which is the highest and that which is most comprehensive – the sun and the sea – and with it humanity's entire previous horizon disappear and give rise to a new sea.[91]

89 *D,* 553; *KSA*, 3.323.

90 Ibid; 323-4.

91 See Karl Löwith, *Nietzsche's Philosophy of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same*, trans. J. Harvey Lomax (Berkeley & Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1997), 41.

The need for new orientation adds hidden depths to what is typically construed as Nietzsche's transitional embrace of 'positivism' at this time. Mostly written in Genoa, *Dawn* is a book that journeys into the future and which for Nietzsche constitutes, in fact, its true destination: "Even now", he writes in a letter of March 1881 to his old friend Erwin Rohde, "there are moments when I walk about on the heights above Genoa having glimpses and feelings such as Columbus once, perhaps from the very same place, sent out across the sea and into the future". Of this Genoa, Ernst Bertram wrote in his study of Nietzsche of 1918: "...that means the sea, it means the secretiveness of the sea, the happiness and the dread it evokes; it means daybreak and beyond, hope without horizon and the most daring adventurousness, godlessness out of profundity, solitude out of a belief in humanity, cynicism out of the will to the highest reverence".[92] In *Dawn* the chief task is clearly laid out: it consists in liberating ourselves from our human inheritance and looking at everything with searching eyes, new eyes. In its suspicion of intoxicated states and concern over the danger of fanaticism, the text continues an enlightenment project. Indeed, Nietzsche saw himself as carrying forward the task of the Enlightenment which he thinks in Germany was only carried out in a half-hearted manner, one that left too much room for obscurantism and reaction.[93]

Although Nietzsche will continue to figure the sublime in different ways in subsequent texts, including devoting a discourse to the sublime ones in *Zarathustra*, several crucially important moves have been made by him in the texts of the middle period. They include the following: (a) discriminating between the sublime of the sage of old and the new sublimities of philosophy; (b) showing how the sublime can now serve as a point of attraction to new realities and experiences (e.g. the ugly).[94] In

92 Ernst Bertram, *Nietzsche. Attempt at a Mythology*, trans. Robert E. Norton (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 225. See also *Z* I, 'On the Bestowing Virtue': "And this is the Great Midday, when the human stands in the middle of its path between beast and superhuman and celebrates its way to evening as its highest hope, for it is the way to a new morning".

93 See *D,* 197 where he mentions as retarding developments: German philosophy, German historiography and romanticism, German natural science, and Kant's attempt to deny knowledge in order to make room for faith.

94 For Burke ugliness is consistent with the idea of the sublime but must be united "with such qualities as excite a strong terror" (Burke 1998: 109). Nietzsche's

HH 217, for example, Nietzsche notes that the ugly aspect of the world, which was originally hostile to the senses, has now been conquered for music: "its sphere of power especially in the domain of the sublime [*Erhabene*], dreadful, mysterious has therewith increased astonishingly". In *The Gay Science* Nietzsche will continue to make use of the sublime in both critical and illuminating senses. In the well-known aphorism on giving style to one's character[95], for example, he figures it in the context of this problematic, noting how the ugly that cannot be removed is on the one hand concealed and, on the other, reinterpreted and made sublime (*Erhabene*). In *GS* 313 he indicates clearly that his intention is not to continue the association of the sublime with images of cruelty and torture: "I want to proceed as Raphael did and never paint another image of torture. There are enough sublime things [*erhabenen Dinge*] so that one does not have to look for the sublime [*die Erhabenheit*] where it dwells in sisterly association with cruelty". His ambition, he tells us, could never find satisfaction if he became "a sublime [*sublimen*] assistant at torture" ('sublime' is used here in the sense of 'subtle' or 'refined').[96]

In a recent study of the philosophy of fear Lars Svendsen has argued, in a chapter which considers the sublime and that begins with a position attributed to Nietzsche, that fear is something that lends colour to the world and a world without it would be boring: "In an otherwise secure world, fear can break the boredom. A feeling of fear can have an uplifting effect".[97] Whilst Nietzsche is not oblivious to the shock function fright can sometimes play in human existence,[98] he does not hold in *Dawn* to

thinking of the ugly and its transfiguration is quite different and linked to more general concerns about human becoming through aesthetic transfiguration.

95 *GS,* 290.

96 See also Nietzsche's letter to Heinrich von Stein of the beginning of December 1882: "I would like to *take away* from human existence some of its heartbreaking and cruel character" (thanks to Rainer Hanshe for drawing this to my attention).

97 Lars Svendsen, *A Philosophy of Fear*, trans. John Irons (London: Reaktion Books, 2008), p. 91. Svendsen's book sets itself a laudable aim: to "break down the climate of fear that surrounds us today" and that has colonised our life-world (p. 8). The 'fear' at work here is what he calls "low-intensity fear" (p. 75).

98 In a note of 1872-3 Nietzsche writes, "Fright [*Das Erschrecken*] is the best part of humanity" (*KSA* 7, 19 [80]). The context in which he states this is a consideration of the conditions under which we venerate what is rare and great, including what we imagine them to be and including the miraculous. Nietzsche's preoccupation with 'greatness' in the *Untimelies* has to be understood in the context of his attack

the position Svendsen credits him with: "Nietzsche complains that the world has lost much of its charm because we no longer fear it enough".[99] In truth, in the passage on which this claim is based – aphorism 551 of *Dawn* - Nietzsche makes no such complaint and his position is much more subtle. It is the aphorism entitled 'Of future virtues', in which Nietzsche looks forward to new experiences and new possibilities of life, not backwards to previous experiences and ancient reverences. In the aphorism Nietzsche is taking cognisance of several facts as he judges them. He observes that as the world becomes more comprehensible to us the more solemnity of all kinds decreases. Hitherto, he notes, it was *fear* that informed humanity's attitude of reverence as it found itself overcome in the face of the unknown and the mysterious, forcing it to "sink down before the incomprehensible". He then asks whether the world will lose some of its appeal once a new humanity comes into being that has grown less fearful in the face of the character of the world: might it not also result in our own fearsomeness becoming slighter? His answer is negative and it is such because of the *courage* that he sees as amongst our new virtues; this is a species of courage so courageous that it feels itself to be "*above* people and things", it is a kind of "excessive magnanimity" and, he notes, has hitherto been lacking in humanity. Nietzsche concludes the aphorism by declaring the age of "harmless counterfeiting" to be over and he looks ahead to the "astronomers of the ideal" who will take over the role of the poets whose task was to be seers who could recount to us "something of the *possible!*" In short, what Svendsen misses is the key point of book five of *Dawn* and around which its various insights hinge, namely, the promise of a *new* dawn.

We know where Nietzsche's thought is heading at this point: in the direction of the gay science with its distinctive mood of *Heiterkeit* (cheerfulness). If the point was not clear in the first edition of the text (*GS*), including the meaning of the announcement of God's death, Nietzsche makes it clear with book five added in 1887 – it commences with an aphorism on the meaning of 'our' cheerfulness and this is the

on a self-satisfied and philistine bourgeois culture. The context of his reflections on the fate of fear and reverence in *Dawn* is quite different and are part of the philosophy of the free spirit and European wanderer.

99 Svendsen, 73.

opening gambit of a book entitled 'We Fearless Ones'.[100] We are not, then, to go forwards in a state of fear or in order to excite it:[101]

> We philosophers and 'free spirits' feel...as if a new dawn shone upon us; our heart overflows with gratitude, amazement, premonitions, expectation...the sea, *our* sea, lies open again; perhaps there has never yet been such an 'open sea'.[102]

100 This is not to deny that there is not at work in Nietzsche a will to the terrifying and questionable character of existence since this is one of the distinguishing features of the strong type as he conceives it (*KSA* 12, 10 [168]; *WP,* 852); and cheerfulness in Nietzsche is always a complicated matter and comes from deep sources. The point to be stressed, however, is that Nietzsche always appeals to 'courage' as the best destroyer and to a courageous humanity, not a fearful one.

101 See the note of March-June 1888 entitled 'Religion as decadence' on this where Nietzsche distinguishes between the fool and the fanatic and the 'two sources' of intoxication: *KSA* 13, 14 [68]; *WP,* 48.

102 *GS,* 343.

Pli 20 (2009), 195-225

Zarathustra and the Children of Abraham

JAMES LUCHTE

Zarathustra's Nietzsche: From Guilt to Innocence

Despite the fact that Nietzsche and his family considered his *magnum opus* to be blasphemous, and feared a backlash from the religious and political establishments, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*[1] was never banned.[2] Indeed, not much notice was taken of it until well after Nietzsche's collapse.[3] In our era, this idiosyncratic work seems to stand in a paradoxical place, all its own. On the one hand, it is a work that is very well known and referenced with respect to some of its most famous phrases and words, such as 'God is dead', the 'Last Man', 'Overman' and 'eternal recurrence of the same'. On the other hand, it is a work that is little studied, either in literary, theological or philosophical contexts. The present essay seeks to redress this neglect through an exploration of the

1 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, trans. Walter Kaufman, (New York: Penguin, 1978), hereafter *Zarathustra.*

2 German Conservatives launched an unsuccessful campaign in 1894-95 to ban the works of Nietzsche as subversive.

3 Since its publication, the work itself has traveled a rather crooked path, being a cult classic for the likes of Stephen George, the 'Nietzscheans' of the Dreyfus Affair, a companion to German soldiers, a text of the death of god movement in theology, and a manifesto for post-structuralist philosophy. To this day, the work is still homeless as it sets in an uneasy relation to not only the dominant philosophy of our era, but also to religious, theological, and literary studies. Indeed, it could be suggested that its style and content exhibits an ambiguity that challenges our clear and distinct divisions of intellectual labor. Cf. *Nietzsche's Thus Spoke Zarathustra: Before Sunrise* for a volume of contemporary essays on the philosophical significance of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, ed. J. Luchte, (London: Continuum International Publishing, 2008).

polemical context of Nietzsche's charge of nihilism against monotheistic religions. Such a focus will allow an intersection of literary, theological and philosophical perspectives in a broader interpretation of the significance of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as a challenge to both traditional, and radical, religious orthodoxies.

It could be suggested that Nietzsche appropriates the name of Zarathustra in a vain attempt to subvert and go beyond Zoroaster, the inventor of good and evil.[4] This attempt is *vain*, in a mocking challenge to the preacher of *Ecclesiastes*, as it asserts that there is *something new under the sun*, or at least that this *something* – novelty – is at least possible – beyond a *metaphysics of an eschaton*. For Nietzsche, the monotheistic eschatons[5] unfold, each as the self-same suppression of Life, as repetitions of the erasure of the moment of becoming. In this way, Nietzsche will not only risk this vanity in an attempt to *think* differently,[6] but will also affirm the possibility of a transfigured existence of radical innocence. It is an affirmation of innocence which displaces the

4 It is well-known that Nietzsche chose Zarathustra, in one instance, since, as a historical and mythological figure, the latter is attributed with the original articulation of the severance of good and evil. For even though we can retrospectively witness the ossification and nihility of his progeny, his act was that of a creator – even if only a creator of nothingness. We can begin to understand the significance of his choice if we consider, for instance, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. R.J.Hollingdale, (New York: Penguin, 1988), p.18, or of the ranting of the madman, in the *Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, (New York: Vintage, 1974) that "God is dead!" – these texts seek neither a mere repetition of the teachings of the "Old Wise Man": C.G.Jung, Nietzsche's Zarathustra: Notes of the Seminar Given in 1934-1939, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 282, nor a project to resurrect or retrieve an *originary* oneness or unity prior to the *beginning* of duality.

5 I have written *eschaton(s)* in the plural not only to underscore the divisions between the various monotheisms, but also to intimate the pluralising event of the 'death of God' which will no longer allow for a conception of a metaphysics of presence in terms of a universal notion of the divine witness or of a logic of a one that is other.

6 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale, (London: Penguin, 1979). The old sin against the regime of guilt is pride, self-love – vanity. Yet, such brings light, it discloses the terrible truth of innocence. "God is a crude answer, a piece of indelicacy against us thinkers – fundamentally even a crude *prohibition* to us: you shall not think!" (p. 21)

disciplinary regimes of radical guilt. Indeed, 'guilt' is the crux of each of the eschatons; yet, guilt is only a moral interpretation of the phenomenon of life which remains merely upon the surface. Nietzsche gives us a clue to his strategy of displacement of these masques with his intimation of a deeper, hidden bind that ties life together (the Dionysian). Zarathustra sings in 'The Other Dancing Song':

> One!
> Oh man, take care!
> Two!
> What does the deep midnight declare!
> Three!
> I was asleep ---
> Four!
> From a deep dream I woke and swear:
> Five!
> The world is deep,
> Six!
> Deeper than day had been aware.
> Seven!
> Deep is its woe;
> Eight!
> Joy --- deeper yet than agony:
> Nine!
> Woe implores: Go!
> Ten!
> But all joy wants eternity ---
> Eleven!
> Wants deep, wants deep eternity.
> Twelve![7]

7 *Zarathustra*, Part Three, 'The Other Dancing Song'.

This is an instance of one of Zarathustra's many evocations and gestures of reversal and revaluation: that the 'truth' of existence must be intimated in the hidden recesses of life. The depths when brought to the surface become disfigured by the procedures of disclosure, by which the intimacy of the singular and its self-interpretation and expression is assimilated within the theistic devaluation not only of the depths, but also, of life and embodied existence. Intimate, indigenous expression is displaced, crowded out by the grand narrative of the eschaton, by the Word of God. For Nietzsche, in this light, the most difficult task is the attempt to *go under* into the depths. If truth loves to hide, we would destroy her if we forced her to stand naked in the *panopticon* of our inspection regime. If we do indeed love the truth, we must travel into the hidden – forbidden – so as to find her *there* – in her truth. *She must speak for herself.*

For Nietzsche, and later for Bataille,[8] Blanchot[9] and Irigaray,[10] and others, it is poetry, music and 'detours' which facilitate a descent into the depths, giving glimpses of truth in her own domain. It is poetry of the dithyramb, as well as music, which can *go under* into the depths, and which will express the *hidden tie* that binds together the knot of eternity. Poetry attempts to bring Truth into the Open without turning her into ashes. With the implosion of the antithetical regime of consciousness and existence, of subject and object, of concept and intuition (and of God and Creation), we find that poetry, even if conceived as a type of conceptuality, is, for Nietzsche, a self-expression of the *phenomenon of life*.[11] The poets were removed from the Light of the *polis* in that they

8 Georges Bataille, *On Nietzsche*, trans. Bruce Boone, St. Paul, (MN: Paragon House, 1994).

9 Maurice Blanchot, *The Step Not Beyond*, translated by Lycette Nelson, (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992).

10 Luce Irigaray, *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche*, trans. Gillian C. Gill, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

11 There is a long development from Nietzsche's earliest writing to his latest which traces a poetic and artistic thread, that is, from his earliest poems to his last "mad" (is it as mad as Hugo Ball?) scribbling – and including all that emerged in-between. We can trace this thread from one of his first poems (1858) "Birthday", through to "On Truth and Lying in the Extra-Moral Sense," again through *The Birth of Tragedy,* and in light of the period of reflection and experimentation in *Human All Too Human*, *Daybreak* and the *Gay Science*, the emergence of Zarathustra as a work of philosophical (and historiographical) creativity in *Zarathustra*. It is noteworthy that Nietzsche to some extent seeks to hide the *lowly origins* of his work – his selection procedure is well known – as is the constructed character of his works. Nietzsche hides his own depth through a strategy of limited revelation. He does include poetry in his works – but not all of his poetry, some of which stands as a counterpoise to Nietzsche's self-portraiture as a *hard man* – a *Radical Aristocrat*. For instance, there are many instances of grief and sadness, of tears and anguish, of suicidal despair, which rarely surface in the published works – or at least, only in *Zarathustra*. His poem about his father's death, *The Homecoming,* while intimating the death of God, is far from the laughter and dancing of a festival celebrating a marriage of light and darkness. It resembles more closely the rantings of the Madman or the Soothsayer, of a passionate, anguished soul. At the same time, however, not all is hidden – even Nietzsche's musical composition and song writing have always been well known – though seldom heard. Despite Nietzsche's secretiveness, it is simple to apprehend that his poems, such as the *Dionysian Dithyrambs* and *Wit, Tricks, and Revenge*, provide the lost horizons and contours – indeed - the birthplace, of Nietzsche's philosophy. For a complete English translation of Nietzsche's poetry, cf. *The Peacock and the Buffalo: the Poetry of Nietzsche.*; a bi-lingual edition is forthcoming from Continuum in 2010.

implored the people to remember the *song of the earth* resonating below the regimentation of the *polis*. Plato charged that *poets lie too much* – that they spoke in ways which made the true false and the false true – that poetry itself was merely the idle chatter of the ephemeral realm, a *logos* of untruth. However, Nietzsche reminds Plato in the Preface to *Beyond Good and Evil* that his attempt to create a 'Good in itself' is a self-negating attempt to deny *perspective*, to refuse Life – in other words, that his lust for an Otherworld is a duplicitous attempt of escape, of nihilism – indeed, a lie, a masque for a will to power. Zarathustra laughs, agreeing that the poets do lie too much – but he tells the troubled youth on the mountainside, "Zarathustra too is a poet."[12] It is perhaps in his use of

12 *Zarathustra,* p. 127. It is well known that Nietzsche also – or primarily, as some may contend – wrote poetry – and composed music. Indeed, with a reading of his poetry, we find that it is indeed a hidden garden, mountains and desert, of his entire work. While one could describe his aphoristic writings, as they were etched into notebooks during his wanderings, as a *typology* of poetic writing, Nietzsche has left a labial body of poetic work which lies far beyond the domain of contemporary philosophy. Never abandoning the original kinship of poetry and philosophy as offspring of *poiesis*, Nietzsche includes poetry in most of his major works – never however disclosing the wellspring of his hidden poetic enterprise. Indeed, it is his poetry which may provide the clues to his broader thematic directions and pre-occupations – his work is not organized according to logical and analytical criteria

poetry, of art, a lie, which is uniquely suited to tell the truth, that Nietzsche's challenge to theoretical philosophy and theology is at its most subversive. For, not only does he throw off the protocols of science and logic, but writing in a style that resembles each of the three monotheistic texts, Nietzsche not only intimates the all-too-human creative root of each of the texts, but also sets forth an alternative teaching, a doctrine which seeks, by returning to the roots of the trajectory of our own era in Zoroaster and Abraham, to counsel human beings in their own self-overcoming of nihilism.

Zarathustra and Abraham: The Destination of the One

Zarathustra, that personage straddling the precipice of history and legend, stands at the *beginning* of a long line of quite familiar religious assertions. He is reputed to be the "first", not only to posit the distinction betwixt good and evil, but also to describe the significance of the world as a *moral* event. In terms of the mytho-theology of the Avesta, the war between good and evil first emerged as a diremption of an originary archic deity, Ahura Mazda, into Vohu Manō and Angrō Mainyush. In this way, the specific horizons of his assertion of difference, and of his remembrance of an *originary* unity, Ahura Mazda, describe a world constituted not only by an "ethical", but also a "metaphysical" opposition between contradictory principles of existence. It is in this way that the *makeshift* regime of good and evil constitutes the fundamental reality and *raison d'etre* of the world. Such a regime is neither an endless Heraclitean opposition, nor an alchemical marriage. For Zarathustra, or Zoroaster as he is also known (and still finds hundreds of thousands of adherents to this day), the specific metaphysical opposition is not stagnant. It is a war of attrition, in which, amid the heat of battle, ground, territory, is gained and lost.[13] Yet, for Zoroaster, this war exhibits a singular destiny, which is an eschatological overcoming of evil by good – but a purely ethical good that would have no need any longer for the ladder of metaphysics. In this manner, the ultimate destiny of the world, made manifest by Zoroaster, is its mystical transcendence *as such* through the dissolution of the metaphysical antithesis of which it was constituted.

– but, as indicated, by a *poetic topology*.

13 Cf. Mao Tse-Tung, *On Protracted War*, (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1967).

This antithesis, and the world it manifests, must, moreover, be overcome by man himself as he affirms his own destiny. For Zoroaster, this destiny achieves its eschatological and post-historical fulfillment by means of an explicit affirmation of one principle over another, good over evil, as counseled in the *Avesta*[14] in the prescription of "Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds". For Zoroaster, the meaning and destiny of the world is accomplished by a retrieval of the originary state, of Ahura Mazda.

Islamic thinkers in Iran have questioned Zoroastrian 'duality' with respect to the status of the two principles, especially with regard to Ahraman, the deity of evil. As is affirmed repeatedly throughout the Qurān, there is only one ultimate principle, that of Allah, who is omnipotent, omniscient and omnibenevolent (merciful). From this perspective, the dichotomist schema posited by Zoroaster, even though not originary, not only constitutes a blasphemy against the power and unity of the divine, as is the case with the Christian trinity (*a monstrous blasphemy*), but also raises the implicit possibility that an alternative principle of ultimate "reality", that is evil, is at least possible. Zoroaster may rejoin that while he begins with such a metaphysical opposition amid phenomenal existence, the eschaton of this conflict would be similar to that of the standard monotheistic equation. Amidst the discord of the world, Zoroaster seeks to retrieve an originary unity of the Good, of the One.[15]

The Islamist contends that Zoroaster errs in giving metaphysical independence to evil in the constitution of the world, and freedom to created, temporal beings in the fulfillment of the eschatological destiny of the world. Indeed, one gains the strange impression, in the Qurān (and the

14 James Darmesteter, trans., *The Zend-Avesta (Sacred Books of the East)*, (London: Routledge, 2001).

15 Indeed, considered from the perspective of the Neoplatonist philosopher Plotinus, for a moment, it could be argued that evil is such a state of indeterminacy that it can never properly be designated a principle, and can never therefore *be* an alternative to the Good or the One. Zoroaster himself would be shoulder to shoulder with the Islamists, especially in the context of the question of evil, an assessment, in the context of the fundamental decision of one principle over the other, of the remembrance of the one over the other. Zoroaster seeks the re-integration of Ahura Mazda in a transcendence of the world. All things, as the story goes, will return to Allah.

Torah, as in the story of Job), that Allah (or God) is deploying evil as a weapon and a test, as a dissimulation. In the Sura, 'The Cow', the angels of Allah, who refer to themselves as 'We', close the ears and seal the eyes of the unbelievers – hardening their hearts, and thus assuring their doom. In their response to the one who does not believe and obey, evil, hardly an independent or threatening force, is simply a temporal worldly phenomenon, deployed against the unbeliever and even encouraged for those who are, within this scenario of pre-destination, beyond hope and mercy. The angels taunt the unbeliever – go ahead and enjoy your unbelief – run riot in the time you have left, in ignorance and blindness – for, in the end, everything and everyone, shall return to Allah.

In the end, Zoroaster shares, with the three monotheistic assertions, a logic of the One, of an eschaton, which, whether it be the 'End of Days' of the Jews (Numbers 24:4), the Apocalypse of the Christians (Revelations), or the Last Judgment of the Muslims (Qūran), signifies the end of the temporal world as a fallen state in which good is opposed by evil. In this way, Zoroaster, as the father of the conquest of evil by the good, of the world of many by the eternal return to God, stands in a remarkable situation of resemblance to Abraham, who remains the official patron of faith of the one God by each of the monotheistic assertions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, each portrayed by Nietzsche as typologies of nihilism. Indeed, Zarathustra shares much ambiguity with Abraham in that each is a transitional figure who had to enact violence in order to create a place for his new assertion. And, while other spiritual formations such as Buddhism, Bahai, and modern day Zoroastrianism do not regard Abraham as their point of departure, from the perspective of Nietzsche's genealogy of religious nihilism, there is a deep metaphysical kinship between all these assertions, one which constitutes, to borrow from Wittgenstein, a distinct family resemblance.[16]

16 Conversely, it could be suggested that Wittgenstein may have borrowed this phrase from Nietzsche as he speaks of the 'spell of definite grammatical functions' in *Beyond Good and Evil*, Part 1, Section 20: "The singular family resemblance between all Indian, Greek and German philosophizing is easy enough to explain. Where there exists a language affinity it is quite impossible, thanks to the common philosophy of grammar – I mean thanks to unconscious domination and directing by similar grammatical functions – to avoid everything being prepared in advance for a similar evolution and succession of philosophical systems: just as the road seems to be barred to certain other possibilities of world interpretation."

In this way, it is Abraham who may serve as an archetype for any metaphysics of nihilism.

Abraham, as the name given to Abram in the wake of his unambiguous demonstration of faith, stands or could stand implicitly, as I have suggested, as the exemplar of faith for any eschatology that sees its fulfillment in a destination toward the One. Indeed, this trajectory is exhibited in the practical metaphysics of Abram in his unquestioning submission and commitment to the will of the one God. In the narrative of *Genesis*, one that is explicitly shared by each of the monotheist assertions, Abram is portrayed as having a longstanding relationship with the divine, one that began implicitly, as a Child, when he smashed the idols of his father, telling the latter when asked, that the idols had fought amongst themselves. Such a faith is sufficient in its incipience for Abram to deny the traditional polytheistic faith of his ancestors. Abram is willing to confront his father and mother and deny their religion - indeed, to break with all that has come before and to begin a new genealogy. Abram was approached by his new God, who initiated a series of tests of faith for him, the first being to leave his traditional home. This was the beginning of the New Covenant in which Abram, in exchange for his faith, was promised a new homeland and the protection of his offspring. After the passage of years and growing aged, however, Abram worried that he still had no children. He was told by his God that his aged wife Sarah would bear him a son. This prophecy aroused an incredulous laughter in Abram and his wife. The laughter soon ended, however, as the seemingly impossible happens, and the faith of Abram grows stronger. At the same time, the rejection of the traditional divinities and homeland of his family, although important for the latter day adherents of monotheism, does not in itself constitute the act which is sufficient to merit the change of name sufficient to found a new genealogy, and to complete the New Covenant. The act which serves as the culmination of his test of faith is not parricide and matricide, but his willingness to sacrifice his own son Isaac. Kierkegaard speculates in his *Fear and Trembling* on the various scenarios which could explicate the meaning of such a divine command for Abram, as the latter himself does not say a word in response to the demand for the sacrifice of the son given to him by his God. With an attitude of religiosity, he simply hears and seeks to obey. Abram makes ready for the sacrifice and sleeps one last night in the knowledge, the premonition, that with the daybreak he will sacrifice his only son. With the

return of the dawn, he departs with Isaac to the altar on the mountaintop, again without a word to his son or to his wife Sarah. In response to a question from Isaac as to the location of the sacrificial lamb, Abram responds reticently that God will provide. As the narrative is fulfilled, Abram places Isaac upon the altar and raises a knife over him – *Isaac witnesses the terrible truth* - but at that moment beyond decision, the angel Gabriel intercedes telling Abram that he need not act – he is let off the hook as the narrative becomes a comedy (the laughter returns). Abram has passed the test of faith, and with his new name, Abraham, is promised progeny who will outnumber the stars. Through his demonstration of faith, Abraham has allowed a new world destiny to be born. The same story is retold, but at a higher level, when God sends his own son into the world as a sacrificial lamb. Through the death of Jesus, God undertakes that which he does not even demand of Abraham.

But, what is the philosophical significance of this eschatology, of this destiny of the One? As diagnosed by Nietzsche, such a destiny is that of nihilism, or, in other words, it is an eschatology which seeks, with its purported lust for the annihilation of the world, to deny the myriad and creative diversity of Life. With his valuation of the ephemeral character of temporal existence, Abram would willingly sacrifice his only son for his God – none of this is sufficiently real to matter, he would perhaps whisper. Yet, for Nietzsche, *God is dead* – he dies with Abram's whisper – *God is stillborn*, in his admission that the creation itself is without value – it is nothing at all in relation to the God who has been established as the seat of all value. This new god resembles a Saturn who swallows his children – and chokes to death on them. Such a transference of the seat of value into the negation of this world of temporal existence is a flight into the Otherworld – it is a nihilism that fails to see world and earth as the only *topos* of affirmation, as the place of the artwork and of lived existence, of life…

It will happen, however, that the adherent of such a destiny will, in good faith, question Nietzsche's diagnosis of nihilism. He will respond to Nietzsche, this physician of culture, with the demand for a second opinion. How, he will ask, is such a reversal possible by which the exemplar of faith is turned into its opposite, into the very annihilation of all affirmations of value, by which a faith in the invisible, in the transcendent, in God, is transformed into nihilism, an inner void of mere nothing? Indeed, was not Abram's seminal submission and commitment

to God not in fact the extreme opposite of nihilism or any seduction to the powers of nothingness? Is not the divine itself the fount of all being, value, of all meaning, radically other to this fallen world of fragmentation and decay? Who would dare to suggest otherwise? How is it possible that the hope for a Kingdom of God is a symptom of nihilism? Such an adherent would regard any such suggestion as simply preposterous.

The Death of God: The Seeds of Its Own Destruction

If we consider the obverse perspective of Abraham as the archetype of faith in light of his commitment to a logic of the One, to an eschaton of negative alterity, we are struck by another Abraham, one who tore the mythological tapestry of Pagan sacred affirmation into threads. From this perspective, Abraham is the *great* destroyer. Born from the cutting of ties with his family and gods, Abraham is the first, or, a first – he is an initiator of a discursive formation, a beginner, an Adam. All future history, moreover, will be merely the unfolding of his essence, which is projected as the limit of the past and the horizon for that which will be. He abides in-between, holding this *undecidability* within himself - even in his decision for the One. The openness of ambiguity, of the ambivalence of a *truth event* remains traced in his decision. Abraham is privy to the mystical foundation of authority in his declaration of independence from the Pagan world, an event which is simultaneously an unambiguous assault on the world and religion of his father and mother. He destroys so as to found a *new beginning*, a *new world order.* Just as he looks into the abyss, however, he covers over and supplants, with his artwork, the *undecidable*, this openness of temporal possibility. The phenomenon of the mystical foundation is suppressed, displaced via spectacles, events, and histories.

If a beginning in violence cannot *completely and intensively* erase the last trace of its violent [origin],[17] any such attempt at eradication will

17 I have placed the term 'origin' in brackets, in the manner of Husserl, so as to underline the problematic character of the term - and in the present context, to intimate the violence inherent in the founding act of an authoritative truth regime. For a detailed discussion of the violence of the founding act of law, see Derrida, Jacques (1992) "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority'" in *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, edited by Drucilla Cornell, Michael

merely provoke a repetition of this trace. This violence, as with the shadow, is inescapable - the irrepressible repetition of the project of eradication does not serve the ostensible program of erasure, but of a repetition of this situation of conflict, through which this project and program are reproduced and augmented. The program becomes an alibi, one that is cultivated for its own sake. It is not foremost significant that a cycle of violence becomes repeated and maintained *for the good*, but that a repetition of violence is itself the metabolism of a violent 'good'. A beginning in violence must live violently if it is to live at all - it must ceaselessly repeat this 'event' of its catastrophic [origin].

The trauma of the violent destruction by Abraham of the gods and goddesses of his ancestors, the idols of his father and mother, becomes repeated not only in his own willingness to sacrifice his late-born son Isaac, but also in the trajectory of his offspring, who in this covenant, countless as the stars, exist in the repetition and perverse fulfillment of that original trauma. More deeply considered, this event of trauma in the midst of Abraham is itself only a repetition of that more original trauma of the expulsion of Adam [and Eve] from the garden of immortality and delight. Miranda has suggested that the creation myth of Adam and Eve was itself a redaction which served as the founding myth and genealogy for Abraham himself.[18] In this way, the transgression by Abraham against the gods of his family is provided a mythical alibi and re-inscription in the narrative of the Fall. This event of transgression by Adam and Eve inaugurates the passage from innocence to guilt, from grace to punitive expulsion, and thus, erects an archetype, which serves to define the essential character of 'human nature'. How could Abraham have acted otherwise?

Rosenfeld, and David Gray Carlson. For a complementary discussion of the murderous intent of Abraham in relation to Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*, see Derrida, J. (1995) *The Gift of Death*, translated by David Wills, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

18 José Porfirio Miranda, *Marx and the Bible: A Critique of the Philosophy of Oppression*, trans. John Eagleson, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1974). Indeed, this pattern of trauma and repetition intimates a deep narrative logic not only for *Genesis*, and on throughout the Hebrew Torah and the Christian Old Testament, the Christian New Testament and the Muslim Qūran. Moreover, it is the triune of transgression, punishment, and atonement, established in *Genesis*, which lays out the *modus operandi* of the fragmented monotheistic dispensations.

Amid the perspective of this reversal, the polytheistic religion of the father and mother of Abraham is re-branded as a condition of idolatry and transgression against the one true God of Abraham. Moreover, the seed of transgression, although facing the onslaught of Divine wrath, remains alive as the trace or taint of original sin. One has sinned and has been punished, but due to the basic existential character of the human being after the Fall, one will sin again in the perverse fulfillment of *human nature*. History is composed of the anecdotes of sin. Indeed, this feature of the divine ordination of sin emerged with an erotic twist with the *Heresy of the Free Spirit* who incorporated sexual acts into their remembrance of the Last Supper, a celebration of the God of Love. Of course, in keeping with the strategy of trauma, these heretics, such as Marguerite Porete, were burned at the stake.[19] It is the Fall and its inexorable repetition, which implicates a naive self-interpretation of the phenomenon of human existence within a regime of guilt. Before the Fall, there were no humans. *There was no before…*

The taint of original sin, this seed of transgression, plays itself out throughout *Genesis* in myriad ways. There is the overwhelming question, in the first instance, of incest in the augmentation and perpetuation of the line of Adam. While some would wish to give deeper esoteric meanings to the fables in *Genesis* – or to de-mythologize these texts altogether – it is instructive to read off the implications of a text *in situ* – a text which, we must recall, still serves as a fundamental source for the very constitution of world-time, world history, and political history. While there is explicit reference to incest in the case of Lot's daughters after the destruction of Sodom and the death of Lot's wife, there is an implicit indication of incest with the question of the identity of the wife of Cain. Who was she… but Eve herself? A daughter is born to Adam, but very late. While this alternative explanation would not itself escape from the labyrinth of incest, the basic implication of *Genesis* is an incestuous relationship between Cain and his mother Eve. In light of the irresistible resemblance to Oedipus in the play by Sophocles, the subsequent humiliating fate of Cain intimates the tragic destiny and *terrible truth* of human existence – as creatures of the Fall. This trajectory of sin plays itself out in the subsequent trajectory of the genealogy of Adam in its eventual corruption in the time of Noah. In this case, the One God decides to destroy all humanity and every living creature except for the

19 Marguerite Porete, *The Mirror of Simple Souls*, (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1993).

family of Noah and the animal and seed stock that Noah is instructed to preserve on the Arc(he). The state of wickedness of human beings is given a more specific content with the punishment and annihilation of Sodom and Gomorrah and in the divine strikes at the Tower of Babel. In the former case, that which offends is the subversion of the sexual archetype of Adam and Eve as the progenitors of humanity. The latter case demonstrates the impossible desire of the one God to maintain his hegemony in the face of his creation at any cost. Lucifer, his prize creation, had already revolted against Him, a rebellion that not only sets a precedent for alterity to the logic of the One within the biblical narrative itself, but also harbors the trace of the terrestrial suppression and erasure of the Pagan *ethos*, the religion of the older gods. This trace of the terrestrial usurpation of the idea of the Holy remains submerged, however, within and without the narrative of *guilt* – of transgression, punishment and atonement.

The supplantation of polytheism by Abraham *et al.* is suppressed within and by the genealogy of Adam, through a displacement of the *hubristic deed* in an act of concealment. Terrorism dwells in a narrative of original Fallenness. One can blame oneself, one can detect in oneself an original sin and capacity for transgression, but the root of this original evil, after Abraham, is located not in the supplantation of the gods, but in the narrative of disobedience to the one God. In other words, the act of supplantation of the Holy, of the gods does not implicate the one God - the guilt of transgression is instead projected upon his enemy, and the fallenness of creation, but in a way that falsifies and shreds this founding act. From the perspective of the ancestors of Abraham, this event is *the death of the gods*. Abraham has committed mass deicide. *Abraham gives birth to evil.* But, simultaneous with this child of evil, is the distortion and re-presentation of its origin – it is re-branded as its opposite – it is hidden in the counter-offensive of accusations of *primordial* guilt, original sin. *God becomes the good*, the gods become, if anything at all, demons within the new myth. From this perspective, Abraham's God is an event of *truth, beauty*, and *good.*

One will recall the diatribe of Nietzsche's Zarathustra that the old gods *laughed themselves to death* in the face of this God who claimed that he was the *only god.* For Nietzsche, it is laughter that will free us from the unlimited bondage of a "divine" which is an imposture and mask of a will-to-power, which is disguised as a will to nothingness. Yet, such

laughter is most difficult amidst the lacerations of the whip, shackle and the stake. One will remain a convalescent or aspire to exist in such a state of convalescence. These wounds run deep, the scars of the surface remain burned upon my soul. Psyche[20] crouches in her own excrement in the tunnels and chambers of an old, dark castle – her visitors decipher tattooed narratives and symbols sliced across her skin. We are condemned to read these inscriptions as well – but, upon our own souls, to decipher not only our own inscription by the logic of the One, but also to fathom the destruction of the Pagan *ethos* and the culture built upon this event.

In the face of all stands an imposture, a mask, of the one God who is other. The sins of the father become replayed, re-activated – repeated – in the children as they seek to maintain this regime of discipline and surveillance – purification, cleansing, power – the heritage and legacy of their ancestors. Abraham supplants his own ancestors, his mother and father, but with his displacement and re-presentation, he re-appropriates the Law of the Ancestors - however, with the *proviso* that he himself is the First of a New Covenant. One must understand that through the labor pains of Abraham, *humanity is born again*. While this supplantation of the old gods resembles the recurrence of overthrow in the Mycenean tapestry, that of Ouranos by Kronos, and the latter by Zeus, the destruction of Abraham stands at a radical distance from the threads of kinship of dynastic succession exhibited in the mythological tapestry of the Pagan gods. This radical distance is constituted by the assertion of *Truth* by Abraham in his destruction of the gods of his father and mother. This assertion of Truth supplants any indigenous criteria or scenario of transfiguration of an existing *mythos*. "Truth" brings Abraham and his monotheistic genealogy onto the tenuous *ground of historicity.* Again, "God" resembles Saturn. Yet, it is not clear if he will vomit up the other gods and goddesses.

History begins, the story goes, amid a *radical breach* with traditional mythological narrative. This breach need not however imply that such a position, that of history, escapes from the domain of *mythos*, but will and must, from the standpoint of its own rhetorical assertion, proclaim the death and irrelevance of myth. As Bataille suggests, however, in his collection of essays on surrealism, *The Absence of Myth*[21], such a historicity, which feeds on the death of myth, is indeed the greatest myth.

20 Alberto Savinio, 'Psyche', in *The Lives of the Gods*, trans. James Brooks and Susan Etlinger, (London: Atlas Books, 1995).

At the same time, while history may be merely *mythos* in drag, the logic of the One and the rhetoric of Truth, abiding in its origin and genealogy, disrupt the evolving tapestry of traditional mythology and inaugurate a strategy of displacement and substitution. Even if the breach has for its *raison d'etre* the establishment of another mythical principle and narrative, it deploys a strategy and rhetoric of Truth which ostensibly defines itself as non-mythical or even anti-mythical. Such a radical positioning is often touted as the intellectual advance of an "ethical monotheism". However, such a denial and suppression of the play of mythical existence threatens a metaphysics of nihilism, of a desire to transcend the *double bind* of the world and earth – the *noumenon* dies as it is cut off from its life in the *phenomena*. One could extend, in this light, Nietzsche's contention in the Preface to *Beyond Good and Evil* that Christianity is '*Platonism for the people*' to the entire Abrahamic genealogy in its ultimate valuation of a domain that is other than the visible and 'fallen' existence of the All. With Plato and Augustine, Abraham seeks through his New Covenant, to establish his own *polis*, his City of God. In this sense, Abraham becomes the Philosopher King, the legislator of the respective status of the visible and invisible realms. In the midst of the destiny of this theological and political eschatology, Abraham is not merely Judge and King, but also, with Al Farrabi, a Priest. That which binds his respective roles together is *faithfulness* to the one God. Yet, as we will see, with his act of faith, and the claim of the truth of his god, he has unleashed a trajectory which will incite further revolts and founding assertions of the One and of Truth in his terrible children, Christianity and Islam.

However, despite the relative success of the genealogy of Abraham, from a terrestrial-political perspective, it is the very strategy and rhetoric of the One Truth, which, simultaneous to the founding act of the monotheistic conjecture, plants *the seeds of its own destruction*. Indeed, the mere possibility of its success would at once sound its own death knell. This Will to Truth, abiding deep within its hidden recesses a primordial will to power, will be, in its victory, compelled to turn this Will to Truth onto itself. *In times of peace, the warlike man turns against himself.* Not only has the death of the old gods set a precedent for the death of the 'immortal', but also the very logic of supplantation, as a Will

21 Georges Bataille, *The Absence of Myth: Writings on Surrealism*, ed. Michael Richardson, (New York: Verso, 1994).

to Truth, already and inescapably sets out the primal scenario for the death of God. From this perspective, Abraham himself becomes the *ugliest man*. His very assertion of the primacy and exclusivity of his God was at once the murderous blow against his God. *If you wish to destroy a cause, become its most excessive advocate.* The monotheistic assertion, in its objectification of God and in its proclamation that *God is Truth*, provokes the flood of oblivion that will return this god to its own primal fate, back amongst the gods who *laughed themselves to death*. The trace of this original breach, the ceaseless and inexorable fragmentation of the tragic assertion of the One, is disseminated as the narrative and congregational discordance of the progeny. The very tools of the trade associated with this Will to Truth, moreover, become targeted upon the assertion of the One, but only in the auspicious Moment of its triumph. That which is exposed in the Socratic maxim of the 'theoretical man' that the *unexamined life is not worth living* is the assertion that the One itself rests upon a *mythos* that stands, as Nietzsche contends, opposed to life. The razor of historical criticism begins the self-lacerating project of unearthing its own roots. In its enactment of an inherited Will to Truth – it kills God.

Reiner Schürmann counseled that the death of an idea always takes much longer than its reign.[22] It took almost two millennia for the God of History to be subjected to the procedures of historicism, methodologies, which were born alongside itself as its spear and shield. *We have killed God. We are the Ugliest Man*. But, we have killed him with the gifts that he himself has given us. The triumph of the essence of this God of Truth is at once his fulfillment and death. The Will to Truth that destroyed the old gods, honed and refined over eons, turns upon itself in a final project of self-examination and annihilation. But seeing nothing but itself and its ubiquitous historical actuality, it finally denies that there is any truth upon this earth. Indeed, it is always already *elsewhere*. In keeping with this otherworldly *disorientation*, it decides that this life is not worth living, and thus, it seeks its own annihilation - it seeks to fulfill the implications

22 Reiner Schürmann, *Heidegger on Being and Acting: From Principles to Anarchy*, (Indiana University Press, 1987). He writes: "When questions are raised about principles, the network of exchange that they have opened becomes confused, and the order that they have founded declines. A principle has its rise, a period of reign, and its ruin. Its death usually takes disproportionately more time than its reign." (p. 29)

of its own exposed *untruth*. The God of History dies because He is exposed as merely historical. The God of Truth dies in that His will to violence pales in the face of the *impossible* task of constituting Himself as the only Truth, as the totality of existence, as *I am that which is*. The world and earth is always His shameful, embarrassing remainder, reminder, always His poison chalice.

Novelty under the Sun: Two Notions of the Will and Will to Power

The Preacher of *Ecclesiastes* would have us believe that a creative life is lived in vain, that there is nothing *new* under the sun. Indeed, any assertion of novelty in this world of finitude is vanity in light of the homeless fate of such expression and exertion. The Master and Slave are each fated to Death -- the one is no more significant than the other – they meet in the End. All works perish or are appropriated by the latecomers. *All is vanity.* There is nothing left to do but drink a little wine and pass the time with one's fellows as this is our God-given portion. Amidst this double bind of finitude and hope, one need, and can only wait - for Death... for God.

At the end of the day, the 'metaphysics' of this Preacher is the same as that of Abraham. That same dichotomy persists between this visible world of decay and fragmentation and that eternal, invisible Otherworld. For both of these figures, it is the latter which holds all value and abides all hope. The willingness of Abraham to sacrifice his late-born son Isaac is, as I have suggested, merely a repetition of his own fateful supplantation of the earthly gods of his father and mother. His faith is given to a god that is *out of this world*, in the *facelessness* of which this world is without value, the only significance of which is its own insignificance. Yet, even as this world is, with Zoroaster, something that is to be overcome, it remains, as with the barren island of Delos, the birthplace of Apollo, the point of departure and negative image of the destination of the invisible. This faithful Abraham would find a kindred will in the willingness of the Preacher to forsake any earthly project or destination as vanity. Both Abraham and the Preacher close their ears to the song and dance of the earth: each abandons the vanity of earthly things, gods and works – each harbors a will that seeks its own ultimate reason and purpose – its highest value – in a beyond or behind of things –

in the transcendent, in the No-thing. This Will to Nothing, as it finds no ultimate meaning in the world and thus does not resist the void that stalks at the perimeter, is the soil for a 'metaphysics' of antithesis and hierarchy, for a 'logic' of the one. Indeed, for Abraham and the Preacher, this Will to Nothing is but one overwhelming Will – that of God – a Will that is already always expressed in the inscriptions of a revealed *logos* upon the old law tablets.

The Will of God is the *a-topos* for the expression of this revealed Truth, which explicitly asserts that It is the only True Will, one that is *elsewhere*, beyond this fallen world, *there* in that No-thing. In light of his resistance to a trajectory of the One, Nietzsche proclaims that this Will to Nothing is a radical attack upon, and falsification of, the phenomenon of Life. He juxtaposes another narrative of Will in Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation*[23] in an incessant unbinding of the strands of the exclusivity of the One God, One Will. While we will fathom that the Will in Schopenhauer is singular and alone – and thus, another variant of the logic of the One (hence, his ethical conclusions) - the very possibility of such a Will immediately disrupts the exclusivity of the monotheistic assertion. The Will, a primal power, is explicitly conceived as the raging heart of the world, as the non-conscious striving of Life. For Schopenhauer, it was not through the clarity of the concept or the light of another world, but instead through music, poetry and dance that the Will is intimated, disclosed. In its insatiable emanations, or objectifications, the Will seeks to satisfy its overwhelming desire for self-knowing and self-expression. While Schopenhauer will, through his ethical pessimism, ultimately expose himself as a nihilist, closely aligned with Abraham and the Preacher, he has nevertheless disclosed the existence of an alternative conception of Will, as a Will to Life, existence, survival, a will to expression and self-understanding. Even if Schopenhauer prescribes a pessimistic negation, this Will, or that which is indicated with this *sign*, exhibits an intense resistance to the Will to Nothing. Just as the persistence of the trace of memory of the destruction of the Pagan *ethos* by Abraham germinates the seeds of the death of god, the antithesis of a Will to Nothing and a Will to Existence explodes the pretension that there can only be the one Will. It is in this context that

23 Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. E.F.J Payne, (London: Dover, 1969).

Nietzsche, speaking through Zarathustra, moves beyond the various logics of the One to the pluri-vocity of the will-to-power.

Each of these notions of the Will indicates a great longing. Yet, even in their apparent opposition, both of these positions imply, for Nietzsche, a radical rejection of the possibility of an affirmation of a creative Life. For Abraham, *this* world is not properly Real – its actuality, he would emphasize, discloses that *everything solid melts into air.* One can be clear and certain only in God and his *New* Covenant. For Schopenhauer, the very futility of the bad infinite disclosed in the Will to Survival, while an adequate description of existence in specific respects, serves to *refute life and the world* – which for Nietzsche seeks not to survive – it already has that – but power and creativity, health. The system of needs and the radical absence of satisfaction underlines, for Schopenhauer, the pointlessness of exertion and expression which only achieve the persistence of a state of unsatisfied desire. Schopenhauer judges, as did Mani, that our only response to the futility of life must be the silencing of the Will in ourselves through an ethical – and reproductive - negation of individuality. The world of the ego, as with Buddhism, is a world that is not properly Real, it persists as a house of cards of borrowed thoughts and vague self-awareness. The ego, which is the mask of the Will, must be broken apart in order for the Will to be detected and then silenced. The striving and suffering of the Will must be denied, if there is to be oneness and repose. Both of these doctrines, each in its own way, set out a temporary metaphysic of duality, as with Zoroaster, that, in its strategic polarity, reveals an eschatology of the One, and in both cases the *eschaton* lies elsewhere from the World - this *topos* of illusion, futility, and our impossible insurrection against nothingness. The One need only acknowledge the Other as long as the creation remains alienated as Other. In and of itself, the World has no meaning, it is as the skin shed by a snake, of no consequence, not left behind – but, secretly assimilated, eaten as *forbidden fruit.*

However, a voice of distress calls out in the Night about the Earth, our fair Sister. This voice declares, in opposition to the previous assertions of will, that *We must remain true to the earth.* The voice of yet another Other, of an insurrection *against* not only the regime and aroma of Nothingness, but also *against* mere Survival, against unsatisfied, frustrated expression, indicates a willing that is alterior to the incestuous wills of negation and repetition. In the face of this will to annihilation

sounds the voices of impossible striving, which although subjected and suppressed, still ceaselessly exist, inexorably creating beyond themselves, playing out this dice game of chance.

Yet, with this proliferation of Wills, each seeking to be All, we sense that we must step back from this notion of 'will' as it is itself merely a veil that has been cast over all things, another fiction that dances over myriad events, tying, suturing them together, in order to fashion a singular fiction - *this* world. It has chased the poets away with its edifice of Truth, but it has also exposed itself as 'only a fool, only a poet'.[24] If these wills collapse into the same, it is the striving amidst the earth that remains for Nietzsche that which exceeds and explodes the bridges and fences stretched across her skin and her rivers. The persistence of the trace of resistance to the grand narrative of any conception of the will shatters the aura of a monocratic explanation of Ultimate Reality. With the utter fragmentation and deconstruction of the nomenclature of the Will as a Unity – whether God, primal surge or *ding an sich* – there emerges the other event(s) that indicate an the intimacy of an impossible insurrection against Nothingness and Survival, a willing that is Other than Will. Or, in other words, the genealogy of the Will, that Great Lie that almost fooled everyone, becomes traced to a deeper origin in the more primal events of creation and transfiguration. Zarathustra exclaims in *On Self-Overcoming*,

> Indeed, the truth was not hit by him who shot at the word of the 'will to existence': that does not exist. For, what does not exist cannot will; but what is in existence, how could that still want existence? Only where there is life is there also will: not will to life but – thus I teach you – will to power.[25]

That which has characterized the operation of the monotheist assertion is, in tandem with the state and the military, the suppression of all that is *heterogeneous*.[26] For the former, it is the other gods, specifically female goddesses (and their devotees) and the erotic ontology of sensuous existence. Monotheism, in other words, has already operationalised the

24 *Zarathustra,* p. 300.

25 Ibid., p. 115.

26 On the distinction between homogeneous and heterogeneous forces, see Bataille, 'The Psychological Structure of Fascism,' *Visions of Excess*, (University of Minneapolis Press).

aspirations of its own, masked, will to power, a will that is couched in the rhetoric of Otherworldly desires, in an ultimacy that is *elsewhere*. It has fulfilled its longing at the cost of sacrifice – of Life, and of affirmation of all that gathers together as World and Earth. It denies new creation in its lust to be the *last* of all creations – *it is the black snake in your throat*. It even denies its own responsibility and capacity for creation as its laws and its very historicity are attributed to Revelation. It camouflages its own will to power as the negation of all will to power, and thus, forbids all will to creation. Yet, its hatred for the world and flesh reveals its desire for the Same (although it always awaits the End, in one form of the other). It substitutes Repetition for Creation. It seeks to put a halt to the possibility of new creation as any novelty would stand as a question mark over its claims to ultimacy. Novelty screams as an exception to its privileged status.

The truth of the monotheist assertion is exposed in the final sentences of Nietzsche's posthumously edited and published fragments, *The Will to Power*, "*This world is will to power -- and nothing else besides?* And you yourselves are also this will to power – and nothing else besides."[27] In its duplicity, the monotheist will to power postures as being a will to nothingness, a will which seeks to transcend power, to annihilate will, to return to a God who is beyond the world and earth. Yet, as it does not act quickly to vacate itself from the face of the earth, *to die at the right time*, or let a new world be born, this rhetoric of beneficence is exposed as merely a masque for a specific type of will to power that seeks merely to perpetuate itself *as long as it can*. However, as intimated, the cost of such a perpetuation of its own will to power, especially in its *bad faith*, is the sacrifice of any new will to creation, of any differing will to power, and more specifically that which is an eruption of this innocence of becoming, this Dionysian power of life, death and rebirth. The power of life is the power of creation, a power of creative effervescence that gives forth *novelty under the sun*. Zarathustra exhorts the crowd in the marketplace – he is a madman shouting:

> I say unto you: one must still have chaos in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star. I say unto you: you still have that chaos in yourselves.

27 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufman, (Vintage Books, 1967), p. 550.

> Alas, the time is coming when man will no longer give birth to a star. Alas, the time of the most despicable man is coming, he that is no longer able to despise himself. Behold, I show you the *last man*.[28]

It is precisely this chaos that the monological assertion seeks to suppress, to eradicate, annihilate – the rattle of this dice throw of chance must be silenced, the very possibility of creation in this realm must be destroyed. But, as every act of destruction is also one of creation, that which is created via the destruction of the Dionysian power of life is the Last Man, the nihilist, the impotent consumer incapable of new creation or self-overcoming, much less self-sufficiency – he is suppressed, contained, and anonymous in his anonymity – he forgets just as soon as he thinks, chewing his cud in blissful ignorance. But, this ignorance is sculpted via burned flesh – not simply a *tabula rasa*, but a complex construction of a simulacrum and discipline – via the fire the Last Man learned to say 'I will' – but not as a will that is an affirmation of will to power, to new creation, but as a submission to a will that is other, to a stratagem of torture, indoctrination and regimentation – he wills in that *he is willed*, in that he *should*, in his obligation – for after all, he is *woman*, he is *guilty*. That which in a previous epoch was worshipped as the irrepressible power of the fertility of life in a ceaseless dance of novelty is given a new status, a new value, devalued, destroyed via the violence of a radically other repository of significance. The Otherworld is the latest fashionable delicacy of the Last Man. New creation becomes at best a mere vanity amid an expendable world of utility – at its worst, new creation is heresy, evil... New creation is a threat to the regime of monocratic assertion. New creation, and *the very physiological possibility of such new creation*, must be annihilated. Possible creators of the future must be made sick, so that they will be able only to serve the legacies of the past. Their innocence must be turned to guilt, their health to disease, their strength to weakness. Order and form suppress the Dionysian power of life and inaugurate the conditions of weakness, which will be expressed as a will to nothingness, as a will that has been made weary by its own regime of suppression. The suppression of this chaos in one's soul in the monotheist assertion sings the same tune as the excess of order and of morality not only Plato's Otherworldly hypothesis, but also, as a microcosm, via the discipline, regimentation and surveillance of the 'theoretical man'. It is

28 *Zarathustra*, p. 17.

bad enough that those who sought to articulate this power of life, the poets, were excluded from the city – on the grounds that *they lied too much* – but it is worse that this entire arrangement of the *polis* rests upon the precipice of a Noble Lie – the Big Lie. The order of the *polis* will be maintained at all costs, the unity of the One is to be pre-eminent to any of its many parts or to anything that *shalt* be excluded in the limit situation of its founding *arche*. Music and song become suspect – *poiesis* is only cultural, never having the status of *praxis*.

Nietzsche claims that it is precisely this obsession with 'unity' – or what could be described as an attempted annihilation of the Dionysian by aesthetic Socratism – is itself already a symptom of weakness, a weariness of life. It longs for that which is radically other as *it cannot stand this life*. It calls for a sacrifice to Asclepius as death will heal it from its sickness. Yet – and this is where we clearly see the will as a masque – even its will to no-thing is still an expression of its will to power – its perverse and repressed 'affirmation' of this life. The Dionysian power of chaos that tears through life, shattering the household in the tragic event, will no longer be allowed to run amok amid the *polis*. It will be rooted out in a realm of a pure *Good in itself*, one in which this *perspectival* character of life, innocent, before good and evil, will be annihilated. From the enforced, and thus universalized, perspective, tied inside the *panopsis* of the Good – the Dionysian power of life, the chaos at the heart of the creative act, is renamed "Evil". But, as with Schelling, Nietzsche warns that such an uprooting will serve *ironically* as the death-knell of such a project of purification and unification. Zarathustra awakens the youth on the mountainside,

> But it is with man as it is with the tree. The more he aspires to the height and light, the more strongly do his roots strive earthward, downward, into the dark, the deep – into evil.[29]

In the masquerade, Life itself will be poisoned, postponed - any trace of this power of life will slowly suffocate under the weight of Repetition, this ceaseless re-assertion of that logic of the One. It is the Overman, who resists this will to a destitute future, who will bite the head off the snake which eats is own tail. Nietzsche poses the question in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: Who will be the one who will grasp hold of chance, in the moment, and exclaim, 'Thus I willed it'? If this is not to be the faceless

29 Ibid., p. 42.

repetition of the *arche*, and if it is to be an opening which gives, makes or takes space for new creation, *it must be the creator*, the Child, who affirms this legacy of accidents as it finds these amidst an innocence of becoming. With the event of lightning, light that shatters the old law tablets, the creator erupts into the aura of the creative event. In this ecstatic openness of possibility, *novelty erupts under the sun.*

Eternal Recurrence of the Same: The Affirmation of the Overman

If the willingness of Abram to sacrifice his son Isaac indicates a *metaphysics of nothingness*, nihilism, the innocent creations of the Dionysian power of life, of the *Overman*, intimate an *affirmation* of the *eternal recurrence of the Same*. Jewish, Christian and Islamic traditions emphasize truth as the criterion for their overthrow of the polytheism of their fathers and mothers. Yet, truth became a hydra, its many mouths biting into the supplanter. Not only does "science" subvert and displace its own myths, but its own methods, such as hermeneutics, are turned on the creator – upon religion and its historicity. With the displacement of the hegemony of the One, there opens a *topos* for the self-expression of many voices. If truth is no longer to be conceived in a positivist, but in a mytho-phenomenological sense, the meaning of affirmation *after* the death of [God] exhibits its specificity in the *letting be* of this Dionysian power of life. It is this power of life that is the eternal *recurrence* of the Same, and this is the *Umwelt* of the affirmation of the *Overman*.

The Dionysian annihilates himself and destroys the household which contains his destiny, as he knows that he will be born again as the Same. The Christian flees from this power of life as his kingdom is not of this world. The death of Jesus, as told within the Pauline tradition, is the ultimate fulfillment of the Abrahamic eschatology in that the Son of God – God himself – becomes the sacrificial lamb. The son, unlike Isaac, is sacrificed, a sacrifice that, as a repetition of the trauma, does not overcome our guilt – as was its intention – but instead, transfers our guilt to a new object, to the dead God on the cross. Nevertheless, in the Pauline account, the Christ will rise again, but only to return to his father, which indeed, in light of the doctrine of the trinity, is merely a return to himself. The metaphysics of alterity is re-affirmed and completed, as the sacrificial lamb is reborn as the Other. The death of Jesus the Nazarene,

as told by the Dionysian (certainly not the story related in the New Testament, which Nietzsche abhorred), is that of the Bacchanalia, the dismemberment and rebirth of the power of Life, of the Same, in the dramatic exposition of a Dionysian pantheistic polytheism.[30] This will to destruction is creative in the sense of a first-born *attempt* – an affirmation amidst the overwhelming powers of Life, which, as with Origen, are *independent of meaning*. In this alternative scenario, the first attempt of affirmation of the hidden powers of life, of Love, by a Dionysian Jesus, clears the space for the birth of the creator, for the *Overman*. Yet, the *Overman*, despite such an imposing designation is simply the Child. The Child, whom Jesus did not send away, affirms the play of Life without sacrifice, as a gift. The Child is the one who can be *laughed at* without any provocation of shame. It spurs him or her on in escalating play. *Laughter is the echo of an excessive affirmation*. We are pressed and shamed to take the monotheistic allegory seriously – and this seriousness is enforced by the proliferating cults of the one god. Yet, the *Overman*, the *child of Zarathustra*, can be a fool – an idiot amidst this event of affirmation. *He provokes laughter without intention*. This is the *topos* where his excessive power seethes, this un-self-conscious creator innocently destroys that which seeks to curtail his own creativity. [*God*] *no longer has a patent on creativity.*

While Nietzsche attempts, in his posthumous fragments, *The Will to Power*, to lay out a cosmological articulation of the eternal recurrence of the same, it will be illuminating to distinguish this exoteric surface of recurrence from that which can be discerned as its esoteric depth. *If* there is a finite Kosmos, and *if* an eternity of time has already elapsed, and *if* there is another eternity beckoning from the future, and *if* the gateway of the Moment indicates a mere *Circle*, a gathering into the Same of bad infinities, *then* how could this specific event of *my* life not have been repeated eternally? On the face of it, this story presents a seduction to the lonely one in that it gives a cosmological *raison d'etre* for its destiny in

30 This tentative formulation arises out of exchanges with Deirdre Daly and Graham Parkes at the Conference on Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* at the University of Wales, Lampeter on 14-16 November 2008. The intent behind this suggestion is the inscription of the narrative of Jesus into the mythological tapestry of Dionysus, in light of not only the affirmation of all that was and is implicit in the notion of eternal recurrence, but also, the poetic freedom unleashed in the notion of a creative future.

the framework of a purposive teleology, or even as a rival eschatology. However absurd, the lonely one is given meaning in the enigmatic, though seemingly logical, proposition of eternal return. *If* we think along with this conditional, *syllogistic*, reasoning, and *if* we accept its premises, then, perhaps, we could regard this proposition, this conjecture, as a real possibility – perhaps as a 'theory' of temporality. It is entirely possible that even the most intimate and intricate simplicities of our lives have been eternally repeated. Yet, such a seemingly logical system, despite its paradoxes, is merely one interpretation, variant of the eternal recurrence, an assertion of a specific will to power. The question still hovers as to that which is absent, erased via this purposive teleology of eternal repetition. Indeed, following Otto, we could, on the contrary, affirm eternal recurrence as a possibility of dysteleology, 'in' the moment (*Augenblick*).[31]

The esoteric meaning of the eternal recurrence, on the other hand, a meaning which remained *unsaid* in Nietzsche's writings (perhaps it was whispered to the goddess Life in 'The Other Dancing Song' in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*) implodes the entire edifice of the exoteric interpretation of a *temporality of return*. Eternal recurrence as the *unhistorical* opens as a *playspace* for the singularity of the *free, very free spirit*. Such an emphasis upon the esoteric dimension of the eternal return plays out as a counterpoise to such higher men as Blanchot,[32]who is shattered by the proliferation of thought without a present, inexorably repeated and infinitely mirrored in his language. *As if death, through him,*

31 Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, (New York: Penguin, 1959).

32 Maurice Blanchot, *The Step Not Beyond*, pp. 11ff. There is much to be praised in *The Step Not Beyond* which could contribute to an exploration of creativity as a multi-voiced phenomenon. At the same time, however, it is precisely such a 'temporality of return', of repetition, that is unmasqued as a mere parody, simulacrum, ape, of the dominant narratives of the *eschaton*. In this way, it could be argued that Blanchot remains upon the seductive surface of paradox. Eugen Fink, in his *Nietzsche's Philosophy*, (London: Continuum International Publishing, 2003), also seems to remain on the surface as he seeks a theory of time in Nietzsche's doctrine. The difficulty is that neither he nor Blanchot (and others) seem to understand that phenomenologically, the ecstasis of the future is not annulled for the questioner, regardless of the seeming necessity of a future that has always already been at the level of the surface, of the exoteric. In this way, creativity or the novel is not annulled by the eternal recurrence, if considered from the perspective of its esoteric depth.

distracted itself. The notion of eternal recurrence, in its exoteric interpretation, is another of Nietzsche's jokes, mocking the eschatologies of nihilism. Zarathustra is the spider who has woven an exquisite web, a game, his cave, to ensnare the Higher Man. Yet, once they are *there* in his cave, Zarathustra wishes nothing better than to get some *good air.* He steps beyond the cave – outside – among his animals and the earth and sky – into the open air of a starry night, to *become what he is*. Time itself is imploded in this affirmation of a singularity of be-ing here, of an *innocence of becoming* – becoming this dice throw of chance, a self-propelled wheel. Zarathustra is not yet the *Overman* – he is the voice in the wilderness who beckons the Coming. We must first traverse the pathway to this event, to this final act of affirmation so that we can descend through the exoteric masque into the esoteric truth of the abyss of singularity. It is the Child in its singularity who affirms the Dionysian *general economy* of life *as it 'is'*. Ostensibly, this is the meaning of the eternal recurrence of the Same.

With the fulfillment of the esoteric singularity of existence, the exoteric snakeskin will be shed, left behind as an artifact of self-overcoming. The notion of the eternal recurrence places great demands upon Zarathustra. The great weight of the idea shatters, crushes him in his own attempt to make the greatest affirmation of existence. He sits as a convalescent, waiting for the sign which will beckon him to not merely articulate, but *effectuate*, the teaching of the eternal recurrence. Zarathustra laughs and calls his animals fools as they chatter on about his destiny as the Teacher of the eternal recurrence of the Same. The animals only know the exoteric story. Zarathustra laughs as he knows that his fate is not to be a mere teacher of an exoteric doctrine, but that he must seek to give birth to *novelty under the sun*, that he must become a Child. He must attempt that which is most difficult – he will give birth to himself.

The exoteric formulation of doctrine of the eternal recurrence of the same, if considered detached from any question of its cosmological significance, discloses for the singular mortal being a *topos* of decision – it stands as the Gateway of the Moment. Everything will return, each in its singularity, exactly as it is and has been eternally. Such a narrative forbids any novelty in its assertion of the monotonous circle. Yet, from the perspective of the esoteric variant of eternal recurrence, the tale of the animals of an endless circle dissolves as, for the free, very free spirit, the future is revealed as the undetermined, as the agon of contestation, as the

place where novelty *can be*, or, – and returning to the joke of the exoteric reading – anything we choose to do is legitimated simply as it has already happened eternally. In this way, too, am I innocent, even if I kill my father and marry my mother. How could it have been any different?

Returning to the esoteric perspective, the dys-eschatology of eternal recurrence, as it intimates the ecstatic openness of the future, does not incite the repetition of the monotheistic conjecture. Yet, in his affirmation of the Dionysian power of life, Life sets forth an ordeal which must be confronted and fulfilled by Zarathustra. The moment of decision (*Augenblick*) of the exoteric doctrine is the gateway to the possibility of a deeper affirmation of existence. It provides the singular mortal being the possibility and actuality of *free creation*, an event of affirmation that seeks to overcome the *historical malady* of nihilism and guilt, a conjuring of the possibility of an unhistorical transfiguration of *life*. This, I suggest, is akin to the moment of anticipatory resoluteness (*vorlaufende Entschlossenheit*) in Heidegger's *Being and Time*[33] or the revolution of the heart, in Kant's *Religion*, in which a decision is made for the *eigentlichkeit* of existence - over against the generic homogeneity of everydayness. Yet, for Nietzsche, such a moment of vision is a necessary prelude to a turn to the deeper esoteric *affirmation* of eternal recurrence, a letting-be of creativity. The *Augenblick*, and the decision that it provokes, in this way, is not sufficient for the *affirmation of the Child.*

We dread the repetition of the Same in all of its specificity as we are burdened by that which has been, and by that which is – and never will be. Yet, Zarathustra calls us to affirm all of this, each – otherwise, there will only be nothingness, nihilism. If a single thing is chanced, or if there is a wish for any single thing to *be different*, then all is cast into question. Conversely, if you ever affirmed any single thing, then you must affirm everything – as All is caught in the Stoic web of *continuum*. But, where is Ariadne's thread which will lead us from this labyrinth of repetition? For we must, in the exoteric scenario, affirm all that which is, seeking to complete, to give meaning, to take responsibility for, all that which has been, is, and will be – and even this future always has already been. *That which is* is to be affirmed in all of its *minutae*. No escape, no exit, will be permitted, no nirvana, no outside - the *actively* nihilistic intentionality of this exoteric assertion plays itself out as a mockery of eschatological

33 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, (New York: Harper & Row, 1962).

doctrines of escape, sleep, death, the One. Yet, the comic, exoteric shell, skin, of eternal return falls away as one ascertains that the scenario of eternal repetition is absurd. Far from the farce of eternal repetition, and the *unexamined assertion* of this repetition, is the disclosure that such a fatalistic scenario of repetition implodes amid a *topos* of silence, in this instant of chance. From a purely logical perspective one could question an eternal Repetition in that, *after the death of God*, there would be no external vantage point that could determine the discrete identity of repeated cycles. Indeed, this is the *ground* of a farce in which any and all acts would be blessed as innocent. This redemption by the comedian clears the space for the affirmation of an *innocence of becoming*.

The *Sisyphian* gesture of the exoteric interpretation of the eternal recurrence serves as a litmus test for *any* metaphysical doctrine of transcendence. Despite this absurdity of his destiny, Sisyphus does not paralyse himself in otherworldly hopes. *He is guilty.* However, with the implosion of the farce of the metaphysical *arche* of existence, there is disclosed an esoteric significance to this doctrine of repetition. *If* it is impossible to distinguish one life from another via the illusory vantage point of an abstract observer, *then*, it is necessary to assert that there is only *one life*. The *most difficult thought* is not that of eternal repetition, but of the singularity of chance. The geometric form of the circle subverts the *possibility* of an authentic future, and thereby, annihilates the chance of the *affirmation of the Child*. The exoteric form of the doctrine is merely an *electuary*, a spoonful of sugar, but one which turns bitter with the disclosure of the *terrible truth*. Sisyphus does not escape, he does not leap down the other side of the mountain to freedom. He does not rebel from his predicament, but still pushes the bolder up the hill. But it is only the narrator who says that he is unhappy, unjoyous.

The possibility of an eternal recurrence, of singular and creative existence, has been prescribed as the medicine for the malady of nihilism, for the metaphysics of nothingness diagnosed as an array of symptoms. The *Overman*, who has undergone convalescence from this malady, is prepared to affirm that most difficult thought. As with the other metaphysical doctrines of escape, eternal repetition removes the singular mortal from the hook – it gives meaning to existence in a meaningless scenario of Repetition. Such a possibility removes the singular mortal from the moment of risk, from the tenuous space of self-understanding. The evocation of eternal recurrence, understood esoterically, however, is

a call to the singular mortal to *become what one is*, to fathom itself out of its own genealogy and life, and to liberate itself from its *topos* of origins through the ecstatic innocence of new creation. The call invokes the singular mortal to return to this truth of life, and to attempt the unhistorical, to *become untimely*, to be a creator. With the dawn of an awakening to this singular chance, the mortal begins to understand the urgency of a life *on death row*. This is not a detached speculation of a sculptor who hammers out his piece and then goes to sleep for the night. *The sculptor is able to walk away.* The task of self-overcoming, an affirmation of *all the which is*, is a situation of violent intimacy – *affirmation is a task of wakefulness*. This singular chance of existence erupts amidst the not-yet of demise – we exist as *free, very free spirits, awake to the terrible truth of existence, but awake also to the voluptuousness of the abyss*. Yet, while we can bear this burden, we can laugh amidst its terror, we can affirm our fate with the cry: 'Thus I Willed It.' Such an affirmation celebrates a festival of free existence which, amidst an imperative of death, is aroused also by its own *dangerous* possibilities. Zarathustra exhorts us to follow ourselves – while we are set free to create the future, we must also affirm that which has made us *what we are*. As *very free spirits*, one task is necessary – to overcome ourselves as mere *convalescents* of nihilism in an excessive affirmation of life that ecstatically creates *novelty under the sun*, a novelty of innocence that has overcome the violence and duplicity of the logic of the One. This is our Fate, which we should and can love as the next page of the story has not yet been written.

Pli 20 (2009), 226-248

Heidegger and Japanese Fascism:

An Unsubstantiated Connection

GRAHAM PARKES

If one moves through certain academic circles having to do with modern Japanese political philosophy, it soon becomes clear that Japan's most renowned thinkers of the twentieth century, members of the so-called 'Kyoto School', were primarily responsible for "defining the philosophic contours of Japanese fascism", and that the major impetus for this nefarious project came from the German philosopher Martin Heidegger.[1] This impression is given by a number of books, some of which are written by renowned scholars and published by prestigious university presses.[2] These texts criticize the most prominent figures in the Kyoto School—Nishida Kitarō, Tanabe Hajime, Kuki Shūzō, Nishitani Keiji, and Miki Kiyoshi—for promulgating fascistic and ultra-nationalistic ideas, usually by trying to establish 'guilt by association' with Heidegger. But on closer examination the scholarship turns out to be sadly short on facts and long on neo-Marxist jargon and deconstructionist rhetoric. Ideological concerns have stifled philosophical inquiry and are now promoting a kind of censorship that smacks, ironically, of a fascism of the

1 Tetsuo Najita and H. D. Harootunian, 'Japanese Revolt against the West: Political and Cultural Criticism in the Twentieth Century', in Peter Duus, ed., *The Cambridge History of Japan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), volume 6, pp. 741-42; Harry Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 359 and *passim*.

2 Peter N. Dale, *The Myth of Japanese Uniqueness* (London: Croom Helm, 1986); Bernard Faure, *Chan Insights and Oversights: An Epistemological Critique of the Chan Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Leslie Pincus, *Authenticating Culture in Imperial Japan: Kuki Shūzō and the Rise of National Aesthetics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); and a journal article by Stella Sandford, 'Going Back: Heidegger, East Asia and "the West"', *Radical Philosophy*, 120 (July/August 2003), pp. 11-22.

left. This would be of no great consequence if fascism had been eradicated after the Second World War, but since fascist movements are still very much with us, scholarly discussions of the phenomenon have a responsibility to identify it properly.

This essay engages several concerns. It extends the argument of an article of mine from 1997, 'The Putative Fascism of the Kyoto School', which shows the neo-Marxist criticisms to be unfounded, and which appears to have gone largely unnoticed in Europe.[3] And since such criticisms of the Kyoto School continue, and now on this side of the Atlantic too, it's worthwhile to keep showing how the critics' ideology distorts the picture they present and ignores any studies that point this out. This exercise also serves to outline further, positive dimensions of the political philosophy of the Kyoto School thinkers. Finally, the appearance of such neo-Marxist criticisms in the U.K. prompted an attempt at exchange and dialogue, the failure of which demonstrates how this kind of ideology extends to the politics of academic journal publishing.

1.

So what did the much criticized Kyoto School philosophers say and write to deserve the moral censure they've been receiving in the Anglophone West? They certainly opposed British, Dutch, and American colonial expansion in East-Asia—but only an unregenerate western imperialist could find their grounds for that opposition invalid. They also venerated the nobler aspects of traditional Japanese culture and lamented their dwindling vitality under the onrush of mass enthusiasm for the modern and the western. Some of them even wrote kind words about the emperor system, and suggested that Japan could become a world power through leading the so-called Great East-Asia Coprosperity Sphere. For all of this they have been dismissed as mere fascist ideologues—when in fact the fascism is being conjured up by projections on the part of morally superior commentators from the side of the victorious Americans. These dismissals have had the dismal effect of stunting the growth of English-

3 Graham Parkes, 'The Putative Fascism of the Kyoto School and the Political Correctness of the Modern Academy', *Philosophy East and West*, 47/3 (1997), pp. 305-36.

language studies of the Kyoto School thinkers, insofar as many potential students have been persuaded that those philosophers are promoters of fascism.

Neo-Marxists love to hate the Great East-Asia Coprosperity Sphere, denigrating it as 'Japan's colonial empire'. But if one looks at Nishida's and Tanabe's ideas about how the project should work, it's clear there is nothing fascistic or even imperialistic about them. And the nationalistic aspect of those ideas—since Japan is the only Asian nation not to have been colonized by the West, it's natural that it should play a leading role in the Coprosperity Sphere—is balanced by a thoroughgoing internationalism. Christopher Goto-Jones has demonstrated the vacuity of the charges of fascism against Nishida's political philosophy and shown the distinctly internationalist dimensions of his thinking.[4] Tanabe's ideas about individual freedom and the multi-ethnic state, and above all his relentless insistence throughout his career on the primacy of reason, definitively preclude his being a fascist philosopher in any sense of the word. This is made clear in a recent study by David Williams that, among many other things, demonstrates the flimsiness of the grounds for accusing Tanabe of fascist leanings.[5] In essays written during the thirties, Kuki expressed optimism about Japan's ability to play a leading role in the Great East-Asia Coprosperity Sphere to help her neighbours combat western imperialism in East Asia, but his nationalism is again tempered by an emphasis on internationalism as the appropriate strategy for Japan to become a greater power in a globalizing world.[6]

Nishitani has been especially harshly criticized for his contribution to a series of symposia held in 1941 and 1942 and sponsored by *Chūō Kōron*, a well-known literary journal, the transcripts of which were later

4 See the discussions of Nishida in Christopher Goto-Jones, *Political Philosophy in Japan: Nishida, the Kyoto School, and Co-Prosperity* (London: Routledge, 2005). Also Graham Parkes, 'The Definite Internationalism of the Kyoto School', in Christopher Goto-Jones, ed., *The Political Philosophy of the Kyoto School* (Routledge, London and New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 161-182.

5 David Williams, *Defending Japan's Pacific War: The Kyoto School Philosophers and post-White Power* (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), especially pp. 92-116. This book also contains a translation by Williams of Tanabe's essay 'On the Logic of Co-prosperity Spheres: Toward a Philosophy of Regional Blocs'.

6 See Parkes, 'The Definite Internationalism of the Kyoto School', pp. 164-70.

published under the title *Japan from a World-Historical Standpoint* (1943). In the course of the discussions he said (among many other things) that Japan's assertiveness in its drive to colonize regions of China and South-East Asia, and in its attack on the American fleet at Pearl Harbor (which had happened shortly before), might not be such a bad thing for East Asia, from a world-historical perspective. One can certainly criticize these remarks for being nationalistic and promoting a kind of imperialism, but the context in which they were made was one in which Japan, as the only major East-Asian country that hadn't been invaded by the imperialist powers of the West, was simply beginning to follow their example by trying to obtain an overseas empire on behalf of its own, longer-standing emperor. In any case nationalism and imperialism are different from fascism—as is the scepticism toward modernism evinced by the Kyoto School thinkers generally, and their reverence for what is great in the Japanese tradition.

It is important to understand these symposia in their context, insofar as their basic premise is that the army's influence on the government was dangerously bellicose, and that some rational discussion of Japan's foreign policy was desperately needed. The main theme of the first session (November 1941) was originally to be "How to avoid war [with the United States]", but under pressure from government propagandists after the attack on Pearl Harbor it had to be changed to "How to bring the war to a favorable end as soon as possible, in a way rationally acceptable to the Army".[7] Even though the publisher prudently expurgated the sharp criticisms of the army and General Tojo that were in the original transcripts, the published version was immediately attacked by ultranationalist and fascist elements in the government as being too tame, 'seditious and anti-war'. The army reacted by ordering the suppression of public activities by the 'Kyoto faction' and forbidding any further print-runs of the book or mention of their ideas in the press.[8] Such measures would have been unnecessary had the participants in the symposium been the raging fascists they are now accused of being. What is clear is that the

7 Horio Tsutomu, 'The *Chūōkōron* Discussions, Their Background and Meaning', in James W. Heisig and John C. Maraldo, eds, *Rude Awakenings: Zen, the Kyoto School, and the Question of Nationalism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1995), pp. 301-02.

8 Horio, 'The *Chūōkōron* Discussions', pp. 291, 303.

accusers, if they have read the texts at all, have completely ignored their complicated context.

But why can't these conflicting views in the contemporary academy be taken simply as a matter of disagreements among scholars offering differing interpretations, without introducing the contentious concept of ideology? The reason is that what traditionally distinguishes philosophy from ideology is that the former is primarily a *questioning*—a questioning of the purported facts of the matter, of the motives and prejudices behind interpretations of the facts, and of any dogmatism that declines to engage in dialogue. Ideology by contrast tends to discourage questioning of the facts so as to promote belief or faith in its system of ideas, and is correspondingly reluctant to engage in dialogue that might put into question the origin of those ideas. The neo-Marxist scholarship on the politics of the Kyoto School thinkers and their relation to Heidegger is a perfect example of this latter syndrome.

2.

It wasn't until 1994 that a dialogue concerning the politics of the Kyoto School thinkers got underway, with a conference on the topic in New Mexico, the revised proceedings of which were published the following year under the title *Rude Awakenings: Zen, the Kyoto School, and the Question of Nationalism*. What is interesting about this collection of essays is that positions on the Kyoto School divide more or less along national lines, with the western authors being more critical and the Japanese more defensive. As David Williams has pointed out, the controversy over Heidegger's connections with Nazism ignited by Victor Farias's sensationalist *Heidegger and Nazism* was a major force behind this divide: "The Farias affair, as an event in Japanese studies, set West against East. The Western savaging of the Kyoto School set the losers of the Second World War against the winners."[9] The divide has to be seen against the background of the received view in the western academy, which conveniently ignores the broader context of international relations formed by western imperialism—which is that the Pacific War as pursued by the United States was a just war, and the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor completely unprovoked. It would be hard to take this 'Pacific War

9 Williams, *Defending Japan's Pacific War*, p. 147.

Orthodoxy' seriously (in Williams's apt phrase) if it hadn't been so clearly manifested in the attitudes that underwrote the United States' disastrous invasion of Iraq some sixty years later.

None of the neo-Marxist scholars referred to earlier appear in *Rude Awakenings*, but they figure prominently in 'The Putative Fascism of the Kyoto School and the Political Correctness of the Modern Academy', which appeared a couple of years after *Rude Awakenings*. This essay, which remains more or less neutral with respect to the political ideas of the Kyoto School thinkers, examines the grounds for the allegations of fascism made by scholars such as Harootunian, Dale, Faure, and Pincus against the major Kyoto School thinkers. One would expect to find such allegations to be based on a working definition of fascism and a reading of primary texts containing ideas that meet the criteria for being fascistic. And when Heidegger is invoked as a pernicious influence, one would hope to be shown just which ideas in his works are fascist in tone or orientation, and which fascist currents of thought they fed into in Japan. Yet none of this is to be found in these neo-Marxist excoriations: the allegations remain brazenly unsubstantiated. They depend on quotations taken out of context, tendentiously inaccurate translations, mere assertions without justifications or arguments, and general insinuation and innuendo.

Although I sent copies of the final draft of the article to the authors whose work I had criticized, in the eleven years since its publication I've seen not a single rebuttal of its claims.[10] While the flood of accusations of Kyoto School fascism has abated somewhat, Harry Harootunian

10 By contrast with this silence, a Japanese translation of the 'Putative Fascism' essay, 'Kyōto Gakuha to "fuashizumu" no retteru: gendai Amerika ni okeru kado na "seijiteki na tadashisa" no mondai', was published in the journal *Zengaku Kenkyû*, 81 (Kyoto, 2002), and was reprinted in Fujita Masakatsu and Bret W. Davis, eds, *Sekai no naka Nihon no tetsugaku* (Kyoto: Showado, 2005).

Several important studies have appeared which give a clearer picture of the political philosophy of Nishida and other Kyoto School thinkers, and one that confirms the essay's premises: Michiko Yusa, *Zen and Philosophy: An Intellectual Biography of Nishida Kitarō* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002); David Williams, *Defending Japan's Pacific War* (2004); Christopher Goto-Jones, *Political Philosophy in Japan* (2005); and Hiroshi Nara *et al.*, *The Structure of Detachment: The Aesthetic Vision of Kuki Shūzō* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005).

continues to prosecute his case. Even though *The Cambridge History of Japan* has been reprinted, the allegations of fascism by Najita and Harootunian in their chapter 'Japanese Revolt against the West' remain unchanged. This piece was reprinted without modification in 1998 and again in 1999 in a collection titled *Modern Japanese Thought*.[11] So here is a situation where Harootunian's allegations of Kyoto School fascism in the most prestigious English-language publication on Japan have been shown to be unsubstantiated—and he simply ignores the criticism and keeps on publishing the accusations. See the evil, speak the evil, but keep the ears stopped firmly shut.

A hint of what is behind this tactic can be found in the transcript of a conversation between Harootunian and Naoki Sakai (whose writings on the Kyoto School philosophers are often very critical but always responsibly argued) published in 1999.[12] Here Harootunian criticizes "the model of the colonial regime for area studies" of Japan in the United States, and the resistance to 'theory' manifested by the conservative American scholars of Japan who had dominated the field since the end of the Second World War.[13]

> Theory teaches us to question the object itself, the object of our inquiry. What's revealed ... is that the object of knowledge is a fiction. ... The object [in this case] is held together by the complicit relations between American scholars and Japanese scholars. This is why the introduction of theory is seen as so dangerous and why professional journals like the *Journal of Japanese Studies* will do anything to suppress it. *What counts is who has the power to make their fiction stick.* ... Enormous resources are involved in this. We're not just talking institutional resources; we're talking about social power, status, jobs, fellowships.[14]

11 Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi, ed., *Modern Japanese Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

12 Harry Harootunian and Naoki Sakai, 'Japan Studies and Cultural Studies,' *positions: east asia cultures critique* 7.2 (1999), pp. 593-647.

13 Harootunian and Sakai, 'Japan Studies and Cultural Studies,', pp. 606-08.

14 Harootunian and Sakai, 'Japan Studies and Cultural Studies,', p. 611; emphasis added.

He has a point here, insofar as the neo-Marxists have tried to exert a Foucauldian power through their knowledge of materials in Japanese that are inaccessible to scholars who don't read the language. And because some of them occupy powerful positions at top universities, people in Japanese studies have been reluctant to question their criticisms of the Kyoto School.

So, now 'theory' appears to have supplanted 'facts' in the postmodern academy. But can 'the object of knowledge' *always* be a fiction? It seems unhelpful to claim so, since the practical distinction between fiction and fact would then collapse altogether. It's reasonable to say, for example, that we know for a fact that Heidegger resigned from the Rectorship of Freiburg University in April of 1934, twelve months after his being appointed. We can also more or less agree on what kinds of new evidence would require us to reassess that fact and to say that we now know that he resigned at a different time. Of course what we think we know about history, and refer to as 'historical fact', always obtains within a certain horizon of interpretation; and as horizons of interpretation vary across cultures and change over time the realm of historical fact is altered accordingly. Yet the general distinction between fact and fiction, while subject to blurring and modification, remains a helpful one—such that one needs compelling circumstances to abandon it.

The first name Harootunian mentions in his book from the following year, *Overcome by Modernity*, and in its very first sentence, is "Friederich [*sic.*] Nietzsche". Perhaps his invoking of power in connection with fiction is meant in the spirit of Nietzsche's famous (but unpublished) dictum: "There aren't any facts, only interpretations".[15] It could derive from a quasi Nietzschean understanding of the world as a field of interpretive forces, a play of will to power: if one excels at such play, one can make one's fiction stick by having one's will prevail, one's world interpretations hold sway.

Yet, when Harootunian says "What counts is who has the power to make their fiction stick", one is reminded less of Nietzsche than of the American neoconservatives' contempt for members of what they call 'the reality-based community'. To adapt that laudably forthright statement by the senior adviser to George W. Bush: "We're an empire now, and when

15 Nietzsche, *Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe*, 12:315; *The Will to Power*, § 481.

we write, we create our own reality".[16] Just as the Bush administration's strategy of repeating over and over the mantra *Saddam Hussein / Al Qaeda* had two-thirds of the American people believing for several years that Iraq was implicated in the attacks of 9/11, so Harootunian's mantra, *Kyoto School / Heidegger fascism*, seems to be equally effective in the world of academia. Of course the bulk of the American people had to be made to believe in 'our own reality', to accede to that interpretation of the world, but this hardly validates it.

Nietzsche was a philologist as well as a philosopher, and through practicing that science he came to appreciate the salutary power of scientific scholarship in general. And so a practice like Harootunian's, where one acknowledges sources and texts in the name of doing (theory in/of) history, but then simply says what one wants regardless of evidence or justification of any kind, is from a Nietzschean perspective utterly inadmissible. By contrast with ego assertion through 'social power and status', will to power at its noblest wills through the world rather than the ego, and exercises power through clear and responsible interpretation.[17]

3.

In the introduction to *Overcome by Modernity* Harootunian explains that the work "grew out of a collaboration with Tetsuo Najita that produced ... 'The Revolt against the West'".[18] The reader who consequently expects more on the putative fascism of the Kyoto School is not disappointed, though now the main target is the philosopher Miki Kiyoshi, who is described as "clearly associated with Kyoto philosophy".[19]

The book begins with an account of a well-known symposium on 'Overcoming Modernity' that took place in 1942 and some of Nishitani's contribution to it, followed by a discussion of the symposia on 'Japan from the Standpoint of World History'. It's a relief to find that the

16 Ron Suskind, 'Faith, Certainty and the Presidency of George W. Bush,' *The New York Times Magazine*, 17 October 2004.

17 For a more detailed explication of will to power as interpretation, see the Translator's Introduction to Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Graham Parkes (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. xx-xxii.

18 Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*, p. xxxiii.

19 Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*, p. 41.

'philosophic contours of Japanese fascism' refrain is now quite muted, being relegated to a dismissive endnote:

> But also see Horio Tsutomu, 'The Chūō Kōron Discussions: Their Background and Meaning' ... for a thinly disguised whitewash of this symposium, whose major orientation was philosophic fascism.[20]

The claim that no group in prewar Japan "came closer [than the philosophers of the Kyoto faction] to defining the philosophic contours of Japanese fascism" was merely asserted by Najita and Harootunian in 'The Revolt against the West', with not a shred of evidence given in support of it. By contrast, Horio's analysis of the *Chūōkōron* discussions is based on painstaking research on the original sources and makes nonsense of the idea that the group was in any way promoting or supporting fascism. If Harootunian wants to claim that this is 'a thinly disguised whitewash' he had better provide some substantive justification, either by showing that Horio is misquoting and/or misinterpreting the transcripts of the symposia, or else by quoting from them himself in order to show just how they constitute "a major orientation [of] philosophic fascism". David Williams's devastating criticisms of Harootunian's account of the symposia show that he is no more interested in even getting the basic facts concerning them right than in offering interpretations based on readings of the primary texts.[21]

Turning to Miki Kiyoshi, Harootunian first introduces him in a tone of some equivocation:

> Miki often skirted with forms of fascist totalizing, even though he also sought to distance himself and Japan from an identity with it. Nevertheless, there is a good deal of folkic totalism in Miki's thinking, which in lesser hands or more determined thinkers ... easily slipped into fascism.[22]

For readers acquainted with Miki's writings, who was profoundly influenced by Marx and studied and wrote about Marxism for many years, this insinuation of a penchant for fascism will come as a surprise.

20 Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*, p. 421.

21 Williams, *Defending Japan's Pacific War*, chapter 4.

22 Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*, p. xxxii.

Even Harootunian himself has to acknowledge that Miki's "Marxian phase ... in a certain sense remained with him until the end".[23] One would have thought that having such a prolonged Marxian phase would have kept him from slipping into fascism. But perhaps Harootunian will amaze after all by adducing works that have been overlooked, or else by demonstrating through analysis of familiar texts an agenda running counter to the received view of Miki as a good Marxist.

The first forty pages of the last chapter of *Overcome by Modernity* discuss Miki's writings on political philosophy which, according to Harootunian, has two sides. One side is introduced by the 'guilt-by-association-with-Heidegger' trick: Miki is said to be "deeply implicated in Heidegger", though just what this unusual condition consists in is left unspecified.[24] In fact Harootunian himself admits two sentences later that Miki distanced himself from the German thinker whose work he had at first admired:

> Despite the hostility he registered in response to Heidegger's Rector address and his decision to join the Nazi party in 1933, there was simply no way of bridging Miki's two sides: the philosopher analyzing the 'current situation' (Marxism) and the thinker promoting the space of Asia (fascism).... In this sense he remained true to the Marxian analytic, even though his theory of action promising a solution bordered on fascism.[25]

After 'skirting with' fascism, Miki's ideas are now bordering on it, thanks somehow to his 'promoting the space of Asia', but since a continuing loyalty to Marxism would tend to render one immune to the lures of fascism, expectations of a truly spectacular revelation from Harootunian become ever greater.

Instead, there ensues an exposition (often obscured by the opacity of Harootunian's jargon-ridden prose) of Miki's writings during his explicitly Marxist period, after which the term 'fascism' begins to

23 Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*, p. 365.
24 Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*, p. 359.
25 Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*, pp. 359-60.

reappear.[26] Referring to Miki's later treatment of the relationship between politics and culture, Harootunian writes:

> Yet this concern surely constituted a sign of a global historical conjuncture where fascism was increasingly the political strategy employed to save capitalism.... But this attempt to realign politics and culture ... showed clearly the linking of fascism and imperialism that ... others would see as a natural manifestation of the expansion of the communal body.[27]

Whatever these sentences mean, we are given no reasons for believing that, if indeed Miki was concerned with saving capitalism, the strategy he proposed for doing so was fascistic—or that he advocated anything like a linking of fascism and imperialism.

Harootunian goes on to generate a great deal of heat around Miki's concern with the 'people' (*minzoku*), which he makes sound sinister by translating the term consistently, and misleadingly, as 'folk'. Why render a word that means 'people' or 'nation' by the bizarre term (in this context, at least) 'folk'? An associate of Harootunian's, Leslie Pincus, has given the answer in the context of another Kyoto School thinker:

> Kuki drew, no doubt, on the semantic resources of the German *Volk*—'folk' in English—and as a translation, 'folk' would have the advantage of invoking the German fascist politics associated with the term.[28]

26 The text is rife with syntactically challenged sentences and orthographic oddities. The attentive reader will be especially baffled by the discussion of Miki's "theory of action through 'poises'" (a misprint for 'poses'?) until much later when the word appears italicized and is associated with the Greek *technē*—which confirms that Miki (if not Harootunian) is talking about *poiēsis* (pp. 360, 387). Numerous similar errors marring the text suggest that in the case of this book Princeton University Press simply dispensed with the tedious work of copy-editing. And the fact that Harootunian's frequent discussions of Heidegger nonsensically conflate his fundamental distinctions between Being and beings (*Sein und Seiendes*: what Heidegger calls 'the ontological difference'), and between Being and Dasein, suggest that the manuscript failed to undergo any kind of review for content either.
27 Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*, pp. 390-91.
28 Leslie Pincus, *Authenticating Culture in Japan: Kuki Shûzô and the Rise of National Aesthetics* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1996), p. 55. See the discussion of this mistranslation and its consequences

This misleading translation will serve the purpose, then, of linking Kuki to fascism in Germany. But Harootunian himself has to admit, in discussing Miki's ideas about the Japanese people: "This kind of folkism, observed in Japan and throughout East Asia, differed from the volkisch ideology of national socialism and was not necessarily incompatible with 'globalism'".[29] Not at all incompatible—and in fact it's central to the political philosophy of the Kyoto School during the 1930s that nationalism and what they call 'Japanism' are completely compatible with internationalism.[30] Harootunian's emphasis on the 'folk' in Miki serves to bend his thought in the direction of National Socialism, so as to facilitate the underhand application of the 'fascism' label.

Underhand because Harootunian presents not a shred of evidence for the claim that Miki espoused any kind of fascism, but simply piles on the solemn asseverations.

> In Miki's reasoning, the idea of social order that the present required was one that "had to transcend modern gesellschaft to conform to a new gemeinschaft" (14:263). This new gemeinschaft was to be seen not as a throwback to a primitive or feudal community (here, his fascism was both modern and rational), but rather as one that now was capable of sublating (*shiyō*) modern society within itself.[31]

After more than thirty pages of innuendo, it suffices simply to insert a parenthetical remark about the nature of Miki's putative fascism and the case is made. But granted that Miki advocated a new *Gemeinschaft*, we would need to be told what features of this new community make it fascistic. Instead, Harootunian merely raises the spectre of "the organicity implied by Miki's conception of fashioning a community": a bizarre idea, since something that is growing organically can hardly be fashioned—but in any case no text of Miki's discussing organicity is cited as evidence. Perhaps we are supposed to be stunned by this utterly unsupported non

in my 'The Definite Internationalism of the Kyoto School', pp. 164-70, and, in the context of Nishida and Tanabe, in Williams, *Defending Japan's Pacific War*, p. 160.

29 Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*, p. 395.

30 See my discussion in "The Definite Internationalism of the Kyoto School," pp. 172-75.

31 Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*, p. 397.

sequitur: "In Miki, this organicism led to political totalitarianism since techné and physis shared a common origin".[32] But because organicism doesn't necessarily entail fascism, we need to hear which features of Miki's organicism made the good Marxist go so totalitarian.

Although the climax of Harootunian's discussion begins hesitantly with yet another admission of Miki's distaste for fascism, it immediately turns unequivocally assertive:

> He often sought to distance himself from historic fascisms ... even as his analysis of Japan's modernity and his defence of imperialism led him to imagine an order that was just as fascistic, inasmuch as it sought to salvage capitalism and the folk which had been estranged from it in its original form as an organic community. A 'modern gemeinschaft' propelled by technological rationality and an organicist folk cooperativeness was simply another name for fascist political totalism.[33]

As if to set a seal of validity on this preposterous claim, the next phrase reads (as the title of the chapter's last section) 'Folkism and the Specter of Fascism'—though there is no further discussion of Miki or his work.

The problem is that Harootunian has provided nothing in the preceding forty pages to support the bizarre conclusion that Miki became a fascist thinker. To the minimal extent that there is an argument here, it's a travesty of the deconstructive method: Because Miki distanced himself from Heidegger's association with Nazism, he was deeply implicated in it; even though he seemed to remain true to Marxism and was repelled by European fascism, he actually supported the Japanese fascists; in short, because nothing overtly fascistic is to be found in Miki's political ideas, he was in fact advocating 'fascist political totalism'.

In the light of such a travesty what is puzzling—and revelatory about the contemporary state of Japanese studies in the United States—is the admiration that *Overcome by Modernity* appears to have generated on the part of some major figures in the field.[34] Has ideology so permeated

32 Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*, p. 398.

33 Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*, pp. 398-99.

34 See the endorsements and excerpts from reviews on the Princeton University Press website: http://press.princeton.edu/titles/6954.html. On the contrast between the current state of Japanese studies in the U.S. and in Europe, see Williams, pp. 46-

historical scholarship that reasoned argument on the basis of textual evidence has become completely *passé*? When the application of the 'fascist' label to thinkers one dislikes has been shown to be unfounded, is it praiseworthy simply to ignore this awkward circumstance and go on doing the same thing at greater length? If not praiseworthy, then definitely effectual, insofar as the neo-Marxist strategy of insistent assertions and silence in the face of criticism now seems to be working better in the U.K. than the U.S.

4.

The glad tidings were brought to the shores of Albion by Stella Sandford's article 'Going Back: Heidegger, East Asia and "the West"', which was published in *Radical Philosophy* in 2003. The opening paragraph begins by invoking Heidegger's influence on Miki, Nishitani, Tanabe, and Kuki.[35] But when Sandford goes on to claim that Miki was the only one, and the only Marxist, seriously to criticize Heidegger after 1933, she goes astray. The philosopher Tosaka Jun was a more committed Marxist than Miki, and he criticized Heidegger often.[36] More important, Miki was not alone in criticizing Heidegger for the infamous Rectoral Address. In September of 1933 Tanabe wrote a commentary on 'The Self-Assertion of the German University' in which he criticized Heidegger's "championing of the racial significance of German academia".[37] But then Sandford closes the paragraph with a topic sentence making this breathtaking assertion: "The most influential reception of Heidegger's work fed into the philosophical justification of fascism in Japan, as

49.

35 Sandford, 'Going Back', p. 11, drawing (with acknowledgment) from the work of Parkes.

36 Sadly little of Tosaka's work has been translated into English, but see the selections in David A. Dilworth and Valdo H. Viglielmo, trans. and eds, with Agustin Jacinto Zavala, *Sourcebook for Modern Japanese Philosophy: Selected Documents* (Westport CT and London: Greenwood Press, 1998), pp. 330-71.

37 Graham Parkes, 'Rising Sun over Black Forest', note 13, in Reinhard May, *Heidegger's Hidden Sources: East-Asian Influences on His Work* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 109. In the meantime an English translation of Tanabe's essay has appeared, in David Williams, *Defending Japan's Pacific War*, p. 181-87. See also Williams's account of Tanabe's essay, pp. 114-16.

Tanabe's writings in particular show".[38] And where does one learn about this philosophical justification of fascism in Japan? The endnote cites two sources: for Miki, it's the chapter in Harootunian's *Overcome by Modernity* just discussed and found less than reliable, and for Tanabe an essay by Naoki Sakai titled 'Ethnicity and Species'.[39]

The impression that the philosophical justification of fascism is going to be a major theme in Sandford's essay is reinforced in the last paragraph of her introduction, where we read that the comparative literature on Heidegger is misleading insofar as it "facilitates the repression of the history of Heideggerian fascism in modern East-Asian, and particularly Japanese, thought". Her fantasy is farther-reaching than Harootunian's: Heidegger's pernicious influence has now apparently spread to fascists in China and Korea as well. Readers keen to learn the identities of these East-Asian fascists who were influenced by Heidegger are disappointed, since no sources are cited for this expansionist claim. Then, strangely, what appeared to be a key topic—the way "Heidegger's work fed into the philosophical justification of fascism in Japan"—simply disappears from the essay until one page before the end, where Sandford again deplores a supposed "silence on the fascist reception of Heidegger in Japan."[40] That this framing assertion of a Heideggerian fascism in Japan should enclose nothing in the way of justification, or even discussion, shows just how powerful the invocation of Harootunian is expected to be. But non-believers will want to be pointed to the specific Kyoto School texts that go beyond nationalism, patriotism, and militarism as far as 'philosophical justifications of fascism'—and to the respects in which these show the influence of Heidegger.

It's strange that Sandford should cite Sakai's essay on Tanabe as a justification for her claim that Heidegger's work fed into the philosophical justification of fascism in Japan, since nowhere in that essay is there any discussion of fascism *or* Heidegger.[41] But in case Sakai

38 Sandford, 'Going Back', p. 11.

39 Sandford, 'Going Back', note 3, p. 20, which cites Naoki Sakai, 'Ethnicity and Species: On the Philosophy of the Multi-Ethnic State in Japanese Imperialism', *Radical Philosophy* 95, May/June 1999, and Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*, pp. 358-414.

40 Sandford, 'Going Back', p. 19.

41 The exception is that at one point in his exposition Sakai resorts to the Heideggerian terms *Geworfenheit* and *Entwurf*, and in an endnote he mentions

does address these topics but indirectly, between the lines as it were, we should examine the argument of 'Ethnicity and Species', since it might turn out to be an indictment of Tanabe's Heideggerian fascism after all. The essay is a critical exposition of such ideas as ethnicity and subjectivity as articulated in a series of essays that Tanabe published during the period from 1932 to 1946, and which were eventually collected under the title *Logic of Species*. Sakai also criticizes an infamous lecture Tanabe delivered at Kyoto Imperial University in 1943, 'Death and Life', and for which he later expressed profound regret. He sums up the main thrust of the lecture as follows: "Having anticipatorily put oneself on the side of death, and thereby secured one's loyalty to the country, one could in fact transform or even rebel against the existing state under the guidance of the universal idea."[42] Sakai adds that Tanabe was somewhat naïve in failing to see that his argument "could easily be distorted or appropriated to serve unintended political interests". Fair enough—but it's hard to imagine the leaders of a fascist state agreeing that their subjects might be justified in "rebelling against the government at any time".

A similar idea is prominent in the *Logic of Species*, where it's clear that "the nation-state is primarily and essentially something to which the individual *chooses* to belong", and where this belonging must be "mediated" by the individual's "*freedom*".[43] For Tanabe the individual only truly belongs to the nation-state when it tries, as Sakai puts it, to "negate and change it", when it "distances itself" from it, "actively transforming it, according to the dictates of universal humanity".[44] Or, in Tanabe's own words:

> Membership in the state should not demand that the individual sacrifice all its freedom and autonomy for the sake of the unity of the species [in Tanabe's sense of the nation-state]. On the contrary, the proposition would not make sense unless the state appropriates into itself individual freedom as its essential moment.[45]

Tanabe's criticizing Heidegger for failing "to recognize the spatiality of social practice" ('Ethnicity and Species', p. 39, and note 24).

42 Ibid., p. 35.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid., pp. 39-40.

Sakai then draws the conclusion: "Therefore the view which equates the nation-state with one ethnic community cannot be accepted at all"—whence Tanabe's promotion of the 'multi-ethnic state' of Sakai's subtitle. Again these are hardly ideas that would have delighted the fascists in Japan, or in Europe for that matter, so it remains a mystery why Sandford should think that "Tanabe's writing in particular show" that the reception of Heidegger's work "fed into the philosophical justification of fascism in Japan".

While Sandford elsewhere in her article makes a valid criticism or two of some of the 'comparative literature' on Heidegger, her complaints that commentators (and especially Parkes) have naively overlooked Heidegger's eurocentrism, nationalism, and association with Nazism, and so have been silent about "the fascist reception of Heidegger in Japan", are groundless.[46] Parkes has indeed been silent concerning the fascist reception of Heidegger in Japan because the existence of such a phenomenon has never been demonstrated.[47] But on the topics of Heidegger's nationalism and his putative connection with Japanese fascism he had published two articles in places where anyone doing research on the comparative literature on Heidegger would easily have found them.[48] So why does Sandford, whose research seems to have been thorough in other respects, fail to take these into account? Either she ignores them because they undermine her main thesis, or else her infatuation with Harootunian's work has blinded her to the existence of anything that criticizes it. In any case her essay is evidence that Harootunian's strategy of relentless assertion of his ideological position—combined with complete silence in response to criticism and adamant

45 Tanabe, 'The Logic of Social Ontology', cited in Sakai, 'Ethnicity and Species', p. 41.

46 Sandford, 'Going Back', pp. 17-19.

47 For discussions of the receptions of Heidegger's philosophy in Japan, see Parkes, *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, pp. 9-11 and 'Rising Sun over Black Forest', pp. 80-81.

48 Six years before 'The Putative Fascism of the Kyoto School' there was 'Between Nationalism and Nomadism: Wondering about the Languages of Philosophy,' in Eliot Deutsch, ed., *Culture and Modernity: East-West Philosophic Perspectives* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991), pp. 455-67, where I criticize Heidegger's nationalism and compare unfavourably his obsessive attachment to a particular plot of soil with Nietzsche's nomadic and cosmopolitan commitment to 'stay true to the earth'.

refusal to engage in dialogue with dissenters—is working quite well on the other side of the Atlantic.

In the culture of academic journal publishing, if a journal has published an article whose author has failed to get the facts right in criticizing other authors in the field, and one of those authors sends in a cogent response pointing out what was missed and misunderstood, it's customary to publish it on the grounds that errors of fact need to be corrected—especially since one can always let the first author reply and have the last word in print. In the present case Parkes contacted the editor of *Radical Philosophy* to ask whether the journal would entertain a response to Sandford's article, and received the answer yes. He duly submitted a long and detailed rebuttal with the title 'Heidegger and Japanese Fascism: An Unsubstantiated Connection'.[49] This piece outlined what was valid in Sandford's criticisms, and then examined the grounds for her most provocative claim—that there is "a history of Heideggerian fascism in modern East-Asian, and particularly Japanese, thought"—which in turn necessitated a discussion of her sources in Sakai and Harootunian (as in sections 3 and 4, above). The conclusion was that those grounds are flimsy to the point of being non-existent. The subsequent story is worth recounting since it reveals much about the politics of a certain area of academia and academic publishing in the U.K.

5.

The reply from the editor of *Radical Philosophy* was polite enough: "I'm sorry to say that we won't be able to offer to publish this".[50] The reasons are given in three short paragraphs, reproduced here in italics, with each one followed by some remarks demonstrating the absurdity of the reasoning.

> *While of obvious interest, the bulk of the article is an attack on Harry Harootunian and other 'neo-Marxists' in US Japanese Studies, worked through a critical response to Sandford's 2003 essay. As such, the few points at the beginning in relation to Sandford's piece function as an introduction to a somewhat personalized attack on Left readings of Japanese Heideggerianism in the 1930s.*

It's hard not to hear the voice of Stella Sandford herself here, in this talk of 'Japanese Heideggerianism in the 1930s'. *Radical Philosophy* distinguishes itself from other academic journals in the field by relying on an in-house 'Editorial Collective' rather than sending submissions out for external review. Since Sandford is a member of the Editorial Collective, most people would see a conflict of interest here—especially since she is the only member to profess even an inkling of acquaintance with Japanese philosophy.

It's at any rate clear that whoever read the essay merely skimmed it, as evidenced by the skewed representation of its content. Rather than a 'few points at the beginning' the response to Sandford constituted just over half of the article, and the criticisms of Harootunian were not 'the bulk' but less than half. Other 'neo-Marxists' or 'Left readings' are mentioned in only three of the essay's sixty-four paragraphs. This already makes clear how one's prejudices about a text inform and can *de*form one's apprehension of it.

More problematic is the 'somewhat personalized attack'—by contrast, presumably, with impersonal criticism. But if *Radical Philosophy* is comfortable with publishing Harootunian criticising Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Robert Paxton,[51] and Sandford criticising Heidegger and Parkes *et al.*, how can they reasonably brand Parkes's critical responses to Harootunian and Sandford personal attacks and therefore unpublishable? But in the interests of keeping the main arguments clear, I cut out anything that could be construed as personal and said that if they could point out anything else that bordered as a personalized attack, I'd be happy to get rid of that too.

The impression that no one had bothered read the article with any care is reinforced by the second set of reasons for rejecting it:

> *The Editorial Collective remains unconvinced both by the attempt to read Heidegger as a means of developing intercultural dialogue and by the suggestion that the history of Heideggerian fascism in East Asia is as 'nonexistent' as the*

49 Reference to website <http://www.academia.edu/GrahamParkes/ >.

50 Mark Neocleous, email message, 27 May 2008.

51 Harry Harootunian, 'The Future of Fascism', *Radical Philosophy* 136 (2006), pp. 23-33.

> *question of fascism in Heidegger's texts prior to the Rector address...*

The initial comment is astounding—since my essay made no attempt whatsoever to read Heidegger as a means of developing 'intercultural dialogue' and doesn't even mention the term. So the Editorial Collective is rejecting my article because it's unconvinced by a reading of Heidegger that the article doesn't attempt to make! This egregious misreading is presumably based on a single sentence *in parentheses* which mentions that some of the secondary literature in German "evaluates Heidegger's contributions to cross-cultural dialogue"—a topic that is touched on for the first time there and never mentioned again. So a 20-word sentence in parentheses stimulates a reading of the essay that ignores the other 7480 words, through carelessness and a projection onto the text of some fantasy of what it might contain.

As for the problem caused by the question of 'fascism in Heidegger's texts prior to the Rector address': I had made the mistake of mentioning in passing that I was personally "unconvinced by any of the arguments for the existence of fascist ideas in Heidegger's pre-1933 writings", but I immediately corrected it by dropping the issue of Heidegger's fascism entirely. With that issue left aside, the argument was now simply this: that, "whatever Heidegger's relation to fascism, not a shred of evidence has been provided for the existence of a 'Heideggerian fascism' in Japan". The Editorial Collective was invited to cite any reliable source (one that gives evidence rather than mere asseveration) that shows otherwise.

But the most striking thing here is the utter spuriousness of the demand for proof of the nonexistence of Heideggerian fascism in East Asia. How does one prove the nonexistence of such a thing? Well, one could cite any text published in East Asia after 1935 that doesn't mention Heideggerian fascist ideas, of which there must be millions. Which East-Asian fascists does the Editorial Collective have in mind? And which fascist ideas of Heidegger's influenced them? It's surely up to the Editorial Collective to produce the texts from (in this case) Miki Kiyoshi, and/or the arguments from Harootunian, that validate the claim that Miki was a fascist. And if there isn't a proven history of Heideggerian fascism in Japan (let alone in East Asia as a whole), Sandford's claim that the comparative literature on Heidegger ignores it is nugatory.

And the last objection:

> *Likewise, there are some other, related, political misrepresentations. For example, the article fails to mention that the 'multi-ethnic state' promoted by Tanabe was the Great East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere, otherwise known as Japan's colonial empire.*

The article had indeed failed to mention that, and I duly rectified the omission, though not without emphasizing that the Co-Prosperity Sphere was never treated by the Kyoto School thinkers as a means to expand the Japanese empire, insofar as they consistently warned *against* the danger that Japan might end up simply emulating the aggressive imperialism of the western powers.[52] Since no other 'political misrepresentations' were specified, I wrote that, if they would tell me what the others were, I would be happy to excise or rectify them.

There were some grounds for supposing, initially at least, that *Radical Philosophy* might be interested in promoting reasoned debate about the vexed topic of Heidegger and Japanese fascism. Among them the statement of principle on its website, which reads:

> *Radical Philosophy* is not committed to any particular philosophy, ideology or political programme. The purpose of the journal is to provide a forum for debate and discussion of theoretical issues on the left.

I sent in a revision of my paper which corrected the above-mentioned shortcomings they had pointed out, along with a 2000-word response showing the absurdity of the other reasons for rejection, and offering to revise again if any relevant facts or arguments were to be advanced by the Editorial Collective. I recommended, if there was any doubt, that it be sent for review to someone like Naoki Sakai, who could be counted on to read it critically. I emphasized the desirability—especially on this side of the Atlantic, where the issues seem less well understood— of initiating a dialogue between the parties in disagreement by publishing my essay, with all errors duly rectified. I concluded with a point of protocol in the publishing of scholarly journals: "Sandford's essay gives the impression that Parkes, as a (perhaps the) primary representative of the comparative

52 See notes 4 and 5, above.

literature on Heidegger, is politically a simpleton. Since it's a matter of her having failed to read or cite the relevant texts, isn't the EC obliged to publish a response from me that sets things right?"

It was no surprise that in the final rejection from *Radical Philosophy* the editor declined to respond to any of the arguments I had made, but simply complained that the piece hadn't been changed enough, remaining "a criticism of Sandford which is then used to launch an attack on Harootunian". So when it's a matter of criticism of their Editorial Collective or its friends, the journal is completely uninterested in "providing a forum for debate and discussion". Indeed, for a publication with *Philosophy* in its name, the adamant refusal to give a decent reading to opposing views, or respond to reasoned argument, or engage in discussion of what constitutes the facts of the matter, is ludicrous. Nor is *Radical Philosophy* "not committed to any particular philosophy, ideology or political programme": instead it employs neo-Marxist ideology to block any incursion of the politically incorrect or factually inconvenient. The refusal to publish a response that corrects errors of fact that undermine the argument of an article previously published in the journal is tantamount to censorship.

But the most distressing aspect of all this is that the same kind of ideological and profoundly unphilosophical discourse that passes for neo-Marxist scholarship in the United States has taken root in Europe, and is perpetuating, with the help of the ideologues at *Radical Philosophy*, the myth of a Heideggerian fascism in East Asia. For self-declared warriors in "the battle against fascism",[53] the comrades in the Editorial Collective seem remarkably uninterested in correctly identifying what it is that we're supposed to be fighting.

53 Mark Neocleous, 'Long live death! Fascism, resurrection, immortality', *Journal of Political Ideologies* (February 2005), 10(1), pp. 31–49, p. 46.

Pli 20 (2009), 249-260

From Symbolism to Symbolic Logic

Alain Badiou. *Being and Event*. Translated by Oliver Feltham.

(London & New York: Continuum, 2005)

DAVID MILLER

0 Disclaimer

Badiou's 500-page amalgam of ontological speculation and axiomatic set theory has recently been mulled over at length in this journal by Christopher Norris (volume 19, 2008, pp. 189–217). If Norris's warm words of approval are unable to fire the potential reader with sufficient enthusiasm for the daunting task of studying the book in depth, then nothing that I can say is likely to be more protreptic. When asked to undertake a review of the book, I made it plain that I did not really expect to understand it, and that the best that I could hope to do was to evaluate Badiou's presentation of some central topics of mathematical logic. Having now experienced the flavour of Badiou's writing, I have modified my aims only by moderating them. But at the end of the review I shall comment briefly on the distinction between the analytic and the continental traditions of philosophy, a distinction that Badiou evidently wishes to transcend. All page and section references that are not further particularized are to *Being and Event*.

1 ZF Set Theory

In the early years of the last century, after the discovery of Russell's paradox, various efforts were made to restore order to set theory by limiting the scope of the unrestricted axiom of comprehension, according

to which any property of, or condition on, objects picks out a set, namely the set of all and only those objects having that property or satisfying that condition. The theory of types of Whitehead & Russell's *Principia Mathematica* avoids the paradoxes of self-reference by dismissing expressions such as 'the set of all sets that do not belong to themselves' and 'the set of all sets' as meaningless. More favoured by mathematicians was the theory of Zermelo, with improvements by others (especially Skolem and Fraenkel), which gives an axiomatic specification of which sets exist, and in its axiom scheme of separation limits comprehension to meaningfully specified subsets of an already given set. A nice comparative treatment of Russell's and Zermelo's theories, and others, is given in Part Three of Quine's *Set Theory and Its Logic*.

The fundamental relation of set theory is the membership or elementhood relation, signified by the stylized epsilon $\in$. In its simplest form, the axiom scheme of separation, inaccurately called here an axiom (pp. 46, 501), states, for each of the infinitely many formulas Ax in which the variable x is free, an axiom $\forall z \exists y(y = \{x \mid x \in z \wedge Ax\})$; that is, for each set z there is a set y that contains as elements exactly the elements of z that satisfy the formula A. Here, and throughout the theory, x, y, z are variables for sets. Writing $x \notin x$ (in words: x is not an element of x) for Ax yields the existence of the set $y = \{x \mid x \in z \wedge x \notin x\}$ consisting of all the elements of z that do not belong to themselves. The usual derivation of Russell's paradox is subverted; for although from $y \in y$ we may derive $y \notin y$, from $y \notin y$ we may derive only $y \notin z$. An immediate consequence is that there is no set u of all sets, thus thwarting Cantor's paradox.

Zermelo's system contains also the axiom of extensionality $\forall x \forall z(\forall y(y \in x \leftrightarrow y \in z) \rightarrow x = z)$, which asserts that each set is determined uniquely by its elements, and several other axioms concerning set existence: those of pair-set, union, and power-set yield respectively the existence of the sets $\{x, z\}$, $\mathsf{U}y$, the set of elements of elements of y, $\wp y$, the set of subsets of y. A statement $A(\wp y)$, for example, which nominally concerns the power-set $\wp y$ is short-hand for the existential statement $\exists x(\forall z(z \in x \leftrightarrow \forall w(w \in z \rightarrow w \in y)) \wedge Ax)$, which is written in terms of the membership relation $\in$ alone. Badiou calls the power-set axiom "the axiom of subsets" (p. 501), but this name has often been used also for the scheme of separation, and may be best avoided. Because the empty domain is excluded in elementary logic, there is at least one set z, and hence the existence of the empty set $\varnothing$,

which Badiou writes about extensively under the name of the void (§§ 4f., 7.3), follows from the instance $\forall z \exists y(y = \{x \mid x \in z \wedge x \neq x\})$ of the axiom scheme of separation.

A simple model of these axioms is given by the hereditarily finite sets: those sets that can be built from $\varnothing$ by finitely many applications of the pair-set and power-set axioms, and the scheme of separation; for example, $\wp\varnothing$, $\{\varnothing, \wp\varnothing\}$, $\wp\{\varnothing, \wp\varnothing\}$, $\{\{\wp\varnothing\}\}$, ... All sets in this model are finite, and to guarantee larger sets the axiom of infinity is needed. It should be noted, however, that the axioms so far given do not exclude infinite sets, nor do they exclude beginningless sequences . . . $\in y_2 \in y_1 \in y_0$, nor even the possibility of self-membership $y \in y$. To rule these out, it is standard to add von Neumann's axiom of foundation AF, about which more is said in section 3 below.

With the axiom of infinity we can go beyond the natural numbers (finite ordinals) to the infinite ordinals, ω, $\omega + 1$, ... Each ordinal characterizes the order type of the set of its predecessors; ω, for example, characterizes a progression, an infinite set that is ordered like the natural numbers, while $\omega + 1$ characterizes a progression followed by a single element. To get further, to $\omega + \omega$ (a progression followed by a progression) and higher ordinals, we need as additional postulates some instances of Fraenkel's axiom scheme of replacement (on p. 500 it too is called an axiom). Together with the power-set and union axioms, this scheme allows us to prove the existence, for each ordinal ν, of the set V_ν of all sets obtainable from $\varnothing$ in a sequence of at most ν steps. ZF set theory is the study of this cumulative hierarchy. It is not consistent to suppose that either the collection of all ordinals, or the collection of all sets, is itself a set.

We write $x \preccurlyeq z$, read 'z is at least a large as x', if there is a one-to-one association of the elements of x with the elements of some subset of z; and $x \prec z$ if $x \preccurlyeq z \wedge z \not\preccurlyeq x$. Cantor's theorem (called in § 7.2 'the theorem of the point of excess') states that $y \prec \wp y$ for every set y, finite or infinite; in words, every set has more subsets than it has elements. It follows that there are infinite sets that are not of the same size. Cantor's beautiful diagonal argument, which provides the proof of this theorem, deserves to be understood by every philosopher who dares to utter a word about the infinite. One form of the axiom of choice AC states that any two infinite sets can be ranked by size. Every infinite set includes a set y such that $y \simeq \omega$. It is easily shown that there is a smallest ordinal ω_1 for

which $\omega < \omega_1$. Cantor's continuum hypothesis CH states that $\omega_1 \simeq \wp\omega$. The most fundamental results in the metamathematics of set theory are that AC and CH are consistent with (Gödel) and independent of (Cohen) the ZF axioms, provided these axioms are consistent on their own.

Badiou reports most of this standard material, and more besides, competently if weirdly. He writes (p. xiv): "I want to emphasize here that I present nothing in mathematics which has not been established; I took some care to reproduce the demonstrations, in order that it not be thought that I glossed them from a distance." Mathematically unpractised readers, and others, may wonder whether so much technical detail is necessary. Adequate page references to some of the good textbooks listed on p. 486 might have sufficed. To bring up to date the first note on p. 496, it should be recorded that one of the texts praised earlier, Krivine's *Théorie axiomatique des ensembles* (PUF 1969), was later much expanded to include a full treatment of Cohen's method of forcing (*Théorie des ensembles*, Cassini 1998; 2nd edition 2007). There exists also an English translation, *Introduction to Axiomatic Set Theory* (Reidel 1971), of the 1969 text.

In the next three sections I comment critically on three elementary topics that Badiou tackles in the early sections (and appendices) of the book: the reduction of relations to sets; the ordinals, and the relevance of the axiom of foundation AF to their definition; and formal logic.

2 Sets and Relations

Fraenkel's scheme of replacement, as it is usually formulated, permits us to drop both the axiom scheme of separation and the pair-set axiom (for the straightforward demonstrations involved see Krivine 1969/1971, Chapter 1, § 4). Badiou does not explain this at the place (§ 12.1) where he might have explained it, but in Appendix 2 takes the pair-set axiom as established and discusses at some length the standard reduction, in most other works attributed to Wiener and Kuratowski, of the ordered pair $\langle x, z\rangle$ to the unordered pair $\{\{x\}, \{x, z\}\}$, and the subsequent representation of relations and functions as sets of ordered pairs, concluding (p. 446): "I have thus completed the reduction of the concepts of relation and function to that of a special type of multiple." The reduction, he holds, is of supreme importance because it puts to flight "the structuralist illusion, which reconstitutes the operational autonomy

of the relation, and distinguishes it from the inertia of the multiple" (p. 446). Only multiples (that is, sets) exist.

Yet there seems to be at least one relation, quite central to set theory (or the theory of multiples, as Badiou calls it), that cannot to be reduced to a set. This is the membership relation, for which we use the sign $\in$. To be sure, the relation that holds between the elements $x, \ldots$ of a set z and z itself can be represented as a set of ordered pairs $y = \{\langle x, z\rangle, \ldots\}$ but this means only that instead of saying $x \in z$ we can say $\langle x, z\rangle \in y$. (If proper classes are admitted, we can write also $\langle x, z\rangle \in (\mathbf{\in} \mid z)$, where $\mathbf{\in}$ is the membership relation on the entire universe.) If we want to assert anything in set theory, then we are obliged to go beyond "the presentation of being" (p. 44), which truly is inert, and resort to the relation of membership (and also that of identity, which can be defined in terms of membership). It is not the sets that are fundamental, but these relations, in terms of which all talk of sets can be parsed. As a technical device, that is to say, the Wiener–Kuratowski definition does admirably what is required of it (that is, we can prove that if $\langle x, z\rangle = \langle y, w\rangle$, then $x = y$ and $z = w$). But it seems unwise to read into it, or out of it, as Badiou does, any ontological consequences of any kind. If anything is the proper subject matter of set theory it is the membership relation, not the sets.

Noting that once the reduction of functions to sets is achieved, mathematicians promptly return to using functional notation in the usual way, Badiou continues, in a confessedly Heideggerean idiom (p. 446):

> The structuralist illusion . . . is the forgetful technical domination through which mathematics realizes the discourse on being-qua-being. . . . Being *does not want to be written* . . . . The structuralist illusion is thus an imperative of reason . . . . Actual mathematics is thus the metaphysics of the ontology that it is. It is, in essence, *forgetting of itself.*

Whatever this means, it seems to get matters all arsy-versy. It is in lapsing into the vocabulary of sets that the fundamentally correct way of speaking — that is, speaking of membership alone — is revoked in favour of a friendlier argot.

It is perhaps worth drawing attention to an interesting recent article by Scott & McCarty, entitled 'Reconsidering Ordered Pairs', in *The Bulletin*

of Symbolic Logic 14, 2008, which shows that, 'canonical' as the Wiener–Kuratowski definition is (p. 445), it is not without alternatives.

3 Ordinals

This section is concerned with Badiou's deviation from the standard definition of Cantor's ordinals (a set not in dispute). Let me try to explain why I disfavour this deviation.

A relation R is a (strict) linear ordering if it is irreflexive (Ryy never holds), transitive (if Rxy and Ryz hold then so does Rxz), and connected (either Rxz or Rzx always holds). An irreflexive and transitive relation R is a well ordering on a set y if every non-empty subset of y has a first element under R. The natural numbers, for example, are well ordered by the less-than relation $<$, but not by $>$. A set y that is well ordered by R is linearly ordered by R, since each two-element subset $\{x, z\} \subseteq y$ must have a first element; that is, to say, either Rxz or Rzx.

The membership relation can be an ordering, for example on the set $\{b, \{b\}, \{\{b\}\}, \ldots\}$. A set z is called transitive, for fairly obvious reasons, if $\forall x \forall y(x \in y \wedge y \in z \rightarrow x \in z)$, or in alternative formulations, $\forall x(x \in z \rightarrow x \subseteq z)$, or $\bigcup z \subseteq z$. Cantor's theorem states that the elements of a set are always less populous than its subsets, so that transitive sets (here also called 'normal sets') display, in Badiou's words "the maximum possible equilibrium between belonging and inclusion" (p. 520). Or, "[i]n other words, in a transitive set in which every element is a part, what is presented to the set's count-as-one is also re-presented to the set of parts' count-as-one" (p. 131).

It is not hard to show that each set in the sequence defined by $y_0 = \varnothing$, and $y_{j+1} = y_j \cup \{y_j\}$ is transitive. The set Y of all these sets is also transitive (for if $y \in Y$ then so is $y \cup \{y\}$; which implies that $y \subseteq Y$). A deliciously neat way, due to Jourdain and von Neumann, of defining the (finite and) infinite ordinals discovered by Cantor is to identify them with this sequence and its prolongation. The finite ordinals are then $0 = \varnothing$; $1 = \{0\}$; $2 = \{0, 1\}$; and in general, $j + 1 = j \cup \{j\} = \{0, \ldots j\}$. The first infinite ordinal ω is the set of all finite ordinals. We can define $\omega + 1 = \omega \cup \{\omega\}$, and so on. As noted above, each ordinal is the set of all its predecessors, and is an element of all those that follow it. The axioms that must be called on for this construction have been identified in section 1 above.

Transitivity is not enough, however, to fix the ordinals so described. The 4-element set $\{0, 1, 2, \{1\}\}$ is transitive, but is not an ordinal. Nor is it wanted, since there exists a 4-element ordinal, namely $\{0, 1, 2, 3\}$. The standard way to disbar these undesired transitive sets is to define an ordinal as a transitive set that is also well ordered by $\in$. Under this definition, the set $\{0, 1, 2, \{1\}\}$ is not an ordinal, since neither $2 \in \{1\}$ nor $\{1\} \in 2$ holds. We can now prove that each element of an ordinal is an ordinal, and hence that each element of an ordinal is transitive.

Badiou proposes a weaker definition of ordinals (pp. 132f.): "An ordinal . . . is transitive, and all of its elements are transitive." He explains (p. 133): "An ordinal is thus a multiple of multiples which are themselves ordinals. This concept literally provides the backbone of all ontology, because it is the very concept of Nature." The definition succeeds in excluding the set $\{0, 1, 2, \{1\}\}$ from ordinalhood, since $\{1\}$ is not a transitive set (1 is an element of $\{1\}$, but it is not one of its subsets). But it does not disallow an ordinal β that is identical with its own singleton $\{\beta\}$, nor does it disallow a beginningless sequence $\ldots \in \beta_2 \in \beta_1 \in \beta_0$ of ordinals. Badiou is perfectly well aware of this, and in the proof that he offers in Appendix 1 of the "[p]rinciple of minimality for ordinals", he is obliged to call on the axiom AF (mentioned in section 1 above). At another place (pp. 487f.), which the reader could easily overlook, he remarks of the standard definition that:

> [i]ts conceptual disadvantage is that of introducing well-ordering in a place where, in my opinion, it not only has no business but it also masks that an ordinal draws its structural or natural 'stability' from the concept of transitivity alone, thus from a specific relation between belonging and inclusion. Besides, I hold the axiom of foundation to be a crucial ontological Idea, even if its strictly mathematical usage is null.

The standard treatment, in contrast, does not require AF in order to exclude from the class of ordinals a set $\beta = \{\beta\}$ (often called an atom), or to exclude infinite descending sequences of ordinals, though AF is required to exclude these things from the universe of sets. But it appears to me seriously to conflict with the principal purpose of axiomatization

unnecessarily to impose AF, even if it is "a crucial ontological Idea", as a necessary part of the definition of the ordinals.

The purpose of axiomatization (which is not to be confused with formalization, though the two often keep each other's company) is to investigate the role that distinct assumptions play in the development of the theory axiomatized. Badiou's treatment, though not technically to be faulted, conceals something of some importance: that the theory of ordinals, and a considerable part of ZF, maintain their validity in the absence of AF, and even in the presence of an axiom that contradicts it (as in Aczel's non-well-founded set theory). This is not a virtue to be sneezed at, since set theory is not exclusively "the theory of the pure multiple" (p. 38), but a theory that can be applied. Not only sets may be collected into sets. But if AF is an inalienable ingredient of pure set theory then that theory contradicts its applications. Between pure and applied arithmetic, or pure and applied geometry, in contrast, there is no such contradiction, only mutual estrangement.

In the article mentioned above, Norris writes that [Badiou's] "preference for ZF over rival systems has to do with its . . . avoiding all forms of premature conceptual (or ontological) commitment, and thereby pursuing what Badiou sees as the path of thought strictly laid down for set-theoretical enquiry" (p. 199). Yet premature ontological disengagement may be as unwise as premature ontological commitment, and for this reason alone the axiom of foundation should be avoided unless it is found to be quite necessary. It is quite unnecessary in the theory of ordinals.

4 Logic

Meditation Twenty-Four (hereafter, § 24), entitled 'Deduction as Operator of Ontological Fidelity', sets out the author's doctrine of the part played by formal deductive logic. "The thesis that I will formulate is simple", he says on pp. 241f.; "*deduction* — which is to say the obligation of demonstration, the principle of coherency, the rule of interconnection — is the means via which, at each and every moment, ontological fidelity to the extrinsic eventness of ontology is realized." At a technical level the discussion is, in several respects, seriously defective. This is not a dire problem, of course, since it is well known how matters can be put right.

But it is somewhat depressing to encounter such a poor presentation of this all too familiar topic.

Badiou presents logic as an axiomatic system of demonstrations (in the style of Hilbert & Ackermann's *Principles of Mathematical Logic*) rather than derivations. He writes on p. 242 that:

> From a formal perspective . . . a deduction is a chain of explicit propositions which, starting from axioms . . . (for us, the Ideas of the multiple, and the axioms of first-order logic with equality) results in the deduced proposition via intermediaries such that the passage from those which precede to those which follow conforms to defined rules.

Only two primitive rules of deduction are offered, *modus ponens* and (universal) generalization, which are presented as rules for inferring new theorems from old theorems; *modus ponens*, for example, takes the form: from $\vdash A \rightarrow B$ and $\vdash A$, it is permitted to infer $\vdash B$. In the presence of a suitably rich set of logical axioms, these rules may be sufficient to generate all the theorems of classical elementary logic, but Badiou does not provide a list of the axioms that he has in mind. He mentions "the tautology $A \rightarrow (B \rightarrow A)$", which, he says quite incorrectly, "posits that a true proposition is entailed by any proposition" (p. 243), and also $(C \rightarrow D) \rightarrow (\sim D \rightarrow \sim C)$, a form of contraposition that is glossed as follows: "if a proposition C entails a proposition D, I cannot deny D without denying the C which entails it" (p. 248). There is also a tortuous defence, based on the principle that "*ontology attributes no other property to multiples than existence*", of the law of double negation expressed as $\sim\sim A \leftrightarrow A$ (pp. 249f.). To obtain a complete system of classical propositional theorems it is necessary to add to these axioms at least the formula $(A \rightarrow (B \rightarrow C)) \rightarrow ((A \rightarrow B) \rightarrow (A \rightarrow C))$, which is nowhere mentioned, as well as some way of introducing and eliminating the connectives &, $\vee$, and $\leftrightarrow$. At other places in the book these connectives are listed and explained (p. 50), and defined in terms of $\rightarrow$ and $\sim$ (p. 459). The universal quantifier is there given a definition in terms of the existential quantifier (so that here in Badiou's system, as in *Principia Mathematica*, a defined term appears in the primitive rules and axioms). I did not find anywhere any further mention of any axioms (such as $\forall y(A \rightarrow C) \rightarrow (\forall yA \rightarrow \forall yC)$) that involve the quantifiers, or any axioms (such as $\forall y(y = y)$) from the logic of equality.

Since these rules are concerned only with the transition from theorems to theorems, only theorems are generated. Badiou notes correctly that, relative to the axioms, all theorems are logically equivalent (p. 243). But in a phrase used earlier (on p. 132) "[t]here is 'better to come'":

> Just as the strict writing of ontology, founded on the sign of belonging alone, is merely the law in which a forgetful fecundity takes flight [see the quotation at the end of section 1 above], so logical formalism and its two operators of faithful connection — *modus ponens* and generalization — rapidly make way for procedures of identification and inference whose range and consequences are vast. I shall examine two of these procedures in order to test the gap, particular to ontology, between the uniformity of equivalences and the audacity of inferences: the usage of hypotheses, and reasoning by the absurd.

It is not quite clear, but it seems to be Badiou's hope that these familiar methods of proof — conditional proof and *reductio ad absurdum* — can be legitimized, one by means of the deduction theorem ("whose strategic value I pointed out eighteen years ago", we are told on p. 246) and the other by the law of contraposition cited above. In the present context, this is an error. Due to Herbrand and Tarski independently, what is called the deduction theorem is a metatheorem stating, in its simplest form, that (in some axiomatic systems) if $A \vdash C$, then $A \rightarrow C$. It is not, however, a metatheorem of the system endorsed by Badiou here, in which derivations from assumptions are impossible (since *modus ponens* allows only moves from theorems to theorems).

5 Analytic versus Continental Philosophy

Badiou takes exception, in his preface to the translation, to the "artificial opposition between Anglo-American philosophy, which is supposedly rationalist, based on the formal analysis of language and mathematized logic, and continental philosophy, supposedly on the border of irrationalism, and based on a literary and poetic sense of expression" (p. xiii); and he expresses the hope that his book marks "the nullity of opposition between analytic and continental thought" (p. xiv). Such irenic sentiments are often expressed by philosophers who teach courses

devoted to continental philosophy, but I have never encountered much sympathy for the obvious consequence that courses devoted to continental philosophy should be discontinued.

The diagnosis of someone who belongs to neither tradition is that "the nullity of opposition between analytic and continental thought" lies often in the nullity of analytic and continental thought; not so much in the opposition as in the opponents. Much analytic philosophy, and much continental philosophy too, as far as I can understand it, consists of philosophizing without a real problem: of pointless conceptual clarification, and of a futile pursuit of justification and assurance. The set theory expounded in this book is interesting, but how the "statement that mathematics *is* ontology — the science of being qua being — is the trace of light which illuminates the speculative scene" (p. 4) is never made clear. Norris tells us that, for Badiou, "philosophy's proper task is not that of making ontological discoveries or exploring new ontological regions on its own account . . . but rather that of pursuing a 'metaontological' enquiry that expounds, clarifies and draws out the consequences (some of them decidedly extra-mathematical) of any results thus obtained" (p. 192). The translator tells us that "the task and scope of philosophy [is] . . . to think occurrences of thought in art, politics, science and love" (p. xx). The author says that "being qua being does not in any manner let itself be approached, but solely allows itself to be *sutured* in its void to the brutality of a deductive consistency without aura" (p. 10). In or out of context, this leaves me none the wiser (and, I am afraid, no better informed either).

It is the absence of any tangible problem that makes the reading of this book so irksome. Ontology may be "the presentation of presentation" (p. 241), but that thought, and others like it, only increase the suspicion that there is no real problem of ontology. The sensitive reader soon wearies too, of course, of the preposterous prose. It is disappointing that someone who has enjoyed "an interminable frequentation" (p. xiv) with the writings of Mallarmé, Hölderlin, and other poets (p. 10), can write with so little grace, and with so little thought for his readers.

6 Note on the Translation

Let us hope that 'criteria', which occurs several times in the Dictionary at the end of the book, will not go the way of 'agenda' and 'data', from

plural to singular. The odd phrase 'equal plain' on p. 246 should perhaps be 'level plane'. In Appendix 6 and elsewhere, 'recurrence' would have been better translated as 'recursion', and 'composed formula' as 'compound formula'. A few other niggling objections could be made to this appendix. In the definition on p. 499 of the alephs only AC will ensure that "[e]very infinite set has an aleph as its cardinality". There is a small error in the definition on p. 503 of the constructible hierarchy L_β.

 David Miller

Centre for Research in Philosophy, Literature and the Arts

Founded in 1985, Warwick's interdisciplinary Centre for Research in Philosophy, Literature and the Arts (CRPLA) brings together scholars working in a wide range of disciplines in order to promote research across Philosophy, the Humanities, and the Arts. The departments associated with the Centre's activities include Philosophy, English and Comparative Literary Studies, French, German, Italian and History of Art. The CRPLA both aims to reflect the interdisciplinary research interests of members working in all of these fields and to encourage productive dialogue across these areas. Previously known as the Centre for Research in Philosophy and Literature, which had a long and distinguished history, the CRPLA has recently expanded its focus to include the Arts. The re-launching of the Centre in 2007 under this new title reflects both a renewed commitment to its well-established interest in the interface between philosophical and literary disciplines and an extension of that interest explicitly to include the arts. In its new form, the CRPLA will provide a unique forum for the exchange of research expertise and for cross-departmental enquiry into the intersections between philosophy, literature and the arts. Its goal is to promote philosophical reflection both on and in these subject areas, while drawing on the expertise of subject specialists to put pressure on philosophical assumptions that might otherwise pass unquestioned in the 'philosophy of art', 'philosophy of literature' etc. The intended upshot is genuinely interdisciplinary research that poses new questions, proposes new theories and even methodologies that would not have arisen within any of the separate subject domains, left to their own devices and methodological assumptions.

The CRPLA has an active programme of events that promote cross-disciplinary research, including lectures, colloquia, and major international conferences; these events run throughout the year; details can be found in the current programme, available on our website. Our annual programme of events is supplemented by the contributions of distinguished Visiting Scholars. Previous Visiting Scholars include Judith Butler, Stanley Cavell, Daniel Conway, Drucilla Cornell, Michel Deguy, Jacques Derrida, Rosalyn Diprose, Robyn Ferrell, Manfred Frank, Rodolphe Gasché, Geoffrey Hartman, Geoffrey Hill, Frank Kermode, Sarah Kofman, David Krell, Julia Kristeva, Jean-Francois Lyotard, Nuno Nabais, Christopher Norris, Martha Nussbaum, Paul Ricoeur, Edward Said, John Sallis, George Steiner, Gianni Vattimo and Marina Warner.

Study and Research Opportunities

In association with the Department of Philosophy, the Centre runs a one-year taught MA in Philosophy and Literature. On this programme students take two special interdisciplinary courses in Philosophy and Literature, two courses from philosophy and two from literature. Students also write a dissertation on an agreed topic. Members of the Centre are also actively involved in teaching on the Undergraduate Degree in Philosophy and Literature. There is also a specialist Doctoral Programme in Philosophy and Literature associated with the Centre. Potential applicants may also wish to consult the list of members of staff associated with the Centre. For further details regarding these courses please consult our website.

The Centre welcomes visits by academics from other institutions, either as Visiting Scholars or on a more informal basis. Those wishing to visit are invited to contact the Director, Peter Poellner (P.A.Poellner@warwick.ac.uk)

Contact

Our website can be found at: http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/philosophy/research/phillit/
The Centre's Office is located in the Department of Philosophy, in the Social Studies Building (S2.70). Queries by email may be addressed to the Centre's secretary, Mrs Lynda Hemsley (L.D.Hemsley@warwick.ac.uk).

Notes for Contributors

- Submissions should be sent to *Pli*, Department of Philosophy, University of Warwick, Coventry, CV4 7AL, UK.

- They should be printed in double line spacing and be accompanied with a copy on disk in rich text format or word document format. If possible, an e-mail address should be included for any further correspondence.

- Accepted submissions will be printed from the electronic copy supplied. Footnotes will be printed at the bottom of the page. Italics and other typographical features (such as accents and text in Greek) will be printed as they appear in the electronic copy (so do not underline items that will eventually appear in italics, such as titles of books, for example). All submissions should be supplied in and will be printed in Times New Roman font.

- Footnote references should conform to the style of the following examples:

  I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. N. Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1929), hereafter *CPR*.
  G. Deleuze, *Foucault* (Paris: Minuit, 1986), p. 24.
  D. W. Conway, 'Genealogy and Critical Method', in R. Schacht, ed., *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 318-33, esp. p. 320.
  D. Sedley, 'Epicurus, On Nature Book 28', *Cronache Ercolanesi* 3 (1973), 5-83, p. 56.

In general, submissions should follow the guidelines outlined in the *MHRA Style Book*, 5th edition (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 1996).